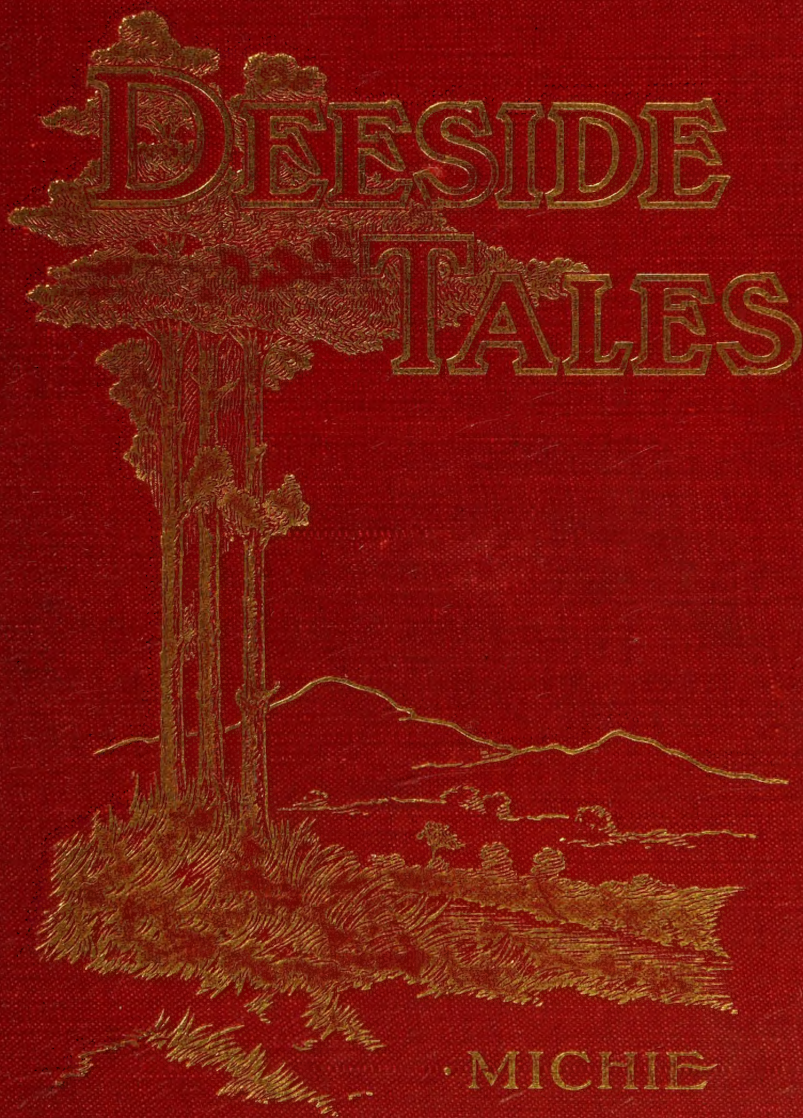


DEESIDE TALES



MICHIE

DEESIDE TALES



STRATHDEE AND CRATHIE, LOOKING WEST.

DEESIDE TALES

OR

Men and Manners

On Highland Deeside since 1745

BY

JOHN GRANT MICHIE

LATE MINISTER OF DINNET

NEW EDITION

WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHY, PORTRAIT, AND ILLUSTRATIONS

EDITED WITH NOTES BY

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Aberdeen

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PREFACE

IN his will Mr. Michie nominated as his literary executors the late Dr. Robert Neil of Cambridge and myself, with full discretionary powers to deal with his literary remains. Dr. Neil having predeceased him, it fell to me to examine a large number of manuscripts in varying degrees of completeness. The principal items are "Annals of Deeside," "History of the family of Gordon," and "Annals of Mar." The first is a large and ambitious project, on which Michie worked intermittently during the greater part of his life, but of which he completed only a preliminary excursus on the topography and geology of the Dee basin. The History of the Gordon family extends to two closely written volumes, but it has been superseded by the "Records of Aboyne" and by Mr. J. Malcolm Bulloch's accurate and exhaustive investigations. The Annals of Mar was partly utilised for the contribution which Michie made to "Under Lochnagar." After careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that none of these are of sufficient value to warrant their publication. In a class by itself is an autobiographical fragment, which unfortunately stops short at the beginning of his career, but which

is of interest both for the account of his early struggles and for the vivid picture which it presents of peasant life in Crathie in the earlier half of last century. It is included in the present volume, and I have added a few paragraphs giving the chief facts of the remainder of Michie's life, which it may be interesting to have put on record regarding the author of "Deeside Tales," a book which seems likely to retain a permanent position among works of local history.

Whatever may have been Mr. Michie's wishes with regard to the writings already mentioned, it was certainly his desire and intention to issue a second edition of "Deeside Tales," and for this he had been making preparations before his death. There is no evidence that he proposed making any substantial alterations on the body of the work, but the memoranda and jottings which he left indicate that he intended to make some additions to the historical side. As his notes unfortunately were in too fragmentary a state to be used in the present edition, the editor has contributed a few historical articles by way of enlarging the scope of the work in the direction which the author contemplated.

J. MACPHERSON WATTIE.

BROUGHTY-FERRY, *July, 1908.*

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THE aim of this little work is to present the reader with a picture of Highland manners and customs as they existed on Deeside during the century subsequent to the Rebellion of 1745. It does not pretend to be a connected history of the period, but merely a sketch of five phases of life, all of them now things of the past, though some of them probably not yet uninteresting or unworthy of recollection. These are—1st, The Ceteran Life ; 2nd, The Military Life ; 3rd, The Life of the Sennachie ; 4th, That of the Man of Superstitious lore ; and 5th, That of the Free Forester.

The individuals of whom short accounts are given as representatives of these classes are real characters, and the particulars stated regarding them are neither legendary nor imaginary, but such as the writer has reason to believe are substantially true.

The sources of his information have been very various, while his opportunities of collecting it have been numerous and extending over many years. For the materials of the memoir of Alexander Davidson, and in great part also for the form in which they are presented, he has been indebted to a friend who probably knew that singular man more intimately, and understood him better than any one now living.

[*School of Coldstone, 1872.*]

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*The portrait is by Annan, Glasgow, from a photograph ; the
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY



John G. Michie

AUTOBIOGRAPHY



ON my father's side I am of pure plebeian extraction. My paternal great-great-grandfather crossed the hills from Strathdon or Corgarff, the *officina* of our name, and settled on Gairnside, tending a few sheep on the hills and tilling a few acres of land by the moors. His name appears in the Poll Book, 1696. Whence the origin of the name or how the Michies came to Dee- or Donside I do not wait to inquire. The following genealogy is sufficient for my present purpose:—i. *John Michie* came from Corgarff; died about 1720; issue—ii. *Alexander Michie*; settled in Wester Micras c. 1710; died c. 1760; issue—iii. *Charles Michie*; born c. 1750; married Mary Fraser, of an old Protestant family; died c. 1810; issue—iv. *James Michie*, my father; born 1792; married Margaret Grant, 1823; died 1861.

On the mother's side my descent is traced thus:—Sir James Grant of Freuchie, laird of Grant, and father of the 1st Earl of Seafield of that name, had by a daughter of the goodman of Aviemore an illegitimate son *Alexander*. The paternity was acknowledged, and the mother, whose name was Janet Grant, was handsomely paid for his maintenance and education. She afterwards married one of the Grants of Rothiemurchus, to whom she bore at least one daughter, who became the mother of Mr. John Grant, bank agent,

Kemnay. Besides Alexander, his illegitimate son, Sir James had six legitimate children. One of the sons was Major Grant of Auchterblair, who was brother-german to my grandfather. Major Grant was the father of Field-Marshal Sir Patrick Grant, who was my mother's cousin-german. The relationship was fully acknowledged, though there was not much intercourse between them.

Alexander Grant was born in 1758, came to Deeside in 1776, and married Elizabeth Brown, of an old family, and one of the best educated women of her time in the district. He died in 1842. His daughter Margaret, my mother, was born in 1800, married in 1823, and died in 1892.

My mother's forebears had thus some claim to quality; and though, by the misfortune of his birth, my grandfather's education may not have been so well attended to as it otherwise might have been, it was much in advance of that of young men of his own class on Deeside. His manners and whole bearing were also of a higher type, and soon gained him both friendship and respect. In a short time he was able to take a croft from Farquharson of Monaltrie. Thence he removed to Torgalter, where he married and succeeded his father-in-law in a small holding under MacDonald of Rineaton. The proverb that "like draws to like" was well exemplified in my grandfather's marriage. He selected his help-mate from the only family for many miles around that had any credit for learning, and no more congenial spirits were ever joined in matrimony. They were stricken in years when I first saw the light, but I am more indebted to them for some modes of feeling and traits of character than even to my own parents.

Without the least tincture of sentimentality, my father had the warmest heart of any man I ever knew. Easily touched and painfully irrepressible when affected, his feelings

were never proof against the slightest appeals, and by them he was generally governed. I know from sad experience how unpleasant an inheritance he left to one of his children in this sensitiveness of nature. Veneration was the predominant element of his religious feelings. No Jew had ever greater reverence for the sacred word Jehovah than my father had for that and the other names of the Deity. He never relished a book in which these occurred too frequently, and could never be induced to read it aloud, either because the needless repetition grated on his feelings or the solemnity of their use touched them too keenly. When reading for his own benefit merely, if the former was the effect produced he would soon desist, and if the latter, he would find some excuse to retire, book and all, that his weakness might not be observed. But he was sometimes caught in circumstances when neither course was practicable, and then it was almost amusing to note the awkward shifts he would adopt to escape. When he read aloud, whether there were strangers present or not, any piece that became too pathetic for him, he would find something the matter with the text, or with his spectacles, or the light required adjusting, or if none of these availed he would suddenly recollect something that required his absence for a little, and so contrive to conceal the real cause of his inability to proceed. I have watched him on such occasions when his uneasiness was due to the too frequent repetition of God's name: he would at first hesitate to pronounce it, then drop it out of the sentence altogether, or substitute some less direct appellation, such as his favourite one, "The Supreme Being"—an evasion which often increased his perplexity by giving to the subject a greater degree of solemnity. Once I remember, after all his attempts had failed to extricate him from his embarrassment, he slightly lost his temper, and throwing down the book

exclaimed, "The man does not know what he is about. He presumes too much with the name of the Almighty." Mackenzie's man of feeling was stoical in comparison with my father.

Though a staunch Roman Catholic, he had a great respect for the Bible, especially for the New Testament; for I must own that he made a distinction between it and the Old Testament Scriptures. The latter he very seldom read, and was but imperfectly acquainted with their contents. A copy of the New Testament, however, published with the authority of his own Church, he sedulously perused, but almost always by himself, and generally out of sight even of his own family. There were plenty of Protestant copies of the Scriptures in our house, and on the Sabbaths he would see to it that we made a good use of them for ourselves. He was all that the most strict Sabbatarian could desire, except on the single point of reading the newspapers. The deepest feeling in his nature was veneration for the Church of his forefathers, and he was proof against any battery of logic that could be opened on him by the assailants of his religion. He rather sought than avoided controversy of this kind, and though no man could be worse adapted for such contests both from his meagre glossary of English words and his equally meagre acquaintance with the history of his Church, he was fond of being considered her champion.

In my father's youth smuggling had become the trade of the Highlands. Of course, he engaged in it; all then did. But it was never a favourite occupation with him. On Deeside it was carried on very much in this manner. The men procured the bere or barley, often going to the low country for it, and fetching it home in currachs and crook saddles on the backs of a whole herd of Highland ponies. It was then handed over to the women, who manufactured

it into malt, with some slight assistance occasionally from the men. They also converted the malt into spirits, which it was afterwards the business of the men to convey to market. While to their wives, daughters and female servants fell the drudgery, the men moved about the hills from bothy to bothy, gadding and getting drunk. When the Excise appeared, however, both sexes were equally active and daring, and it is difficult to determine from the traditions of the trade which were the bolder and more masculine.

My father's favourite pastime, I should rather say occupation, was not smuggling but shooting—poaching it would now be called. He was passionately fond of the gun, mainly, I believe, because he thought hunting and shooting of all kinds a manly exercise. A peculiar trait of his character was to act the gentleman, to aim at being courteous, generous, and dignified. Poaching at that time in the Highlands was not the sneaking, thievish breaking into preserves and parks with nets and gins to steal game, which in the low country and England goes by the name, but the real wild sport of the chase, in which the prey was hunted down in the wild mountains or wilder glens with almost as much freedom and regardlessness as if it were the right of the bold to practise it. Indeed, so little did some proprietors then regard the preservation of their game that I have heard my father tell that Captain Macdonald of Rineaton, whose tenant he was, would sometimes scold him, not for shooting his grouse, but for disturbing his wedders with his dog and gun in doing so. When poaching began to be considered an offence he gave it up, and never within my recollection did he go beyond the bounds of his own farm in the pursuit of game, though to the end of his days nothing gave him greater pleasure than a shot at a hare when she took too great liberties with his turnips or kailyard whether by day or night.

To return now to myself. I was born on 22nd January, 1830, being the fourth child and oldest son, followed afterwards by three brothers and two sisters—nine in all were we. My earliest recollections of this world do not form a subject of pleasant reflection. I was only eighteen months old when my next brother was born, who was either so sickly or peevish, perhaps both, that he gave my poor mother no end of trouble and no time to think of me. And as for my father he had no taste for children of any age. I do not think he ever had any of us on his knee for five minutes at a time. From that early age I was therefore little cared for. I had indeed no childhood. We were already too large a family to be brought up on the poor croft (for it was little more) to the produce of which we looked for both food and clothing. Of course, we were not worse off than some of our neighbours, and as we knew of no better condition we were wonderfully content with our lot. Let me try to sketch the hamlet in which it was cast. Wester Micras at that time consisted of eleven inhabited houses. There were three small farms, of which ours was one, the arable land consisting of from ten to fourteen acres besides the hill pasture. Three crofts had from three to four acres of land with no hill pasture attached. Each of these was supposed to keep a cow, but never did, and their produce had to be supplemented by fodder, begged or bartered for work done to farmers who had it to spare. As the old race of crofters died out, their holdings were added to the farms. There were besides five cottars with no land beyond a kailyard.

The barns, byres and stables were built as near to the dwelling-house as possible, often attached to the end of it, with the dung-heap directly in front, and only a few paces, in some cases only a few feet, from the door. The cottars' houses had each a pig-stye at the back and sometimes a

hen-house, but always an ash-pit handy in front. The walls of the houses were all built of undressed stones, called "dry stone walls," with fell (turf) gables and roofs of the same material cut on the hillside in thin flakes by a flaughter-spade. Of course, the wind whistled through such walls with but little let or hindrance. This did not matter in summer, for it provided splendid ventilation, but it was different in winter when the winds were loaded with snow-drift. It became, therefore, a part of the autumn labour, as necessary as the "cocking" (fencing with thorns) of the kailyards to prevent the invasion of sheep, to bung the holes in the walls to keep the wind away. This was done in the *go-hairst* (after-harvest) by the women and children collecting a quantity of moss crop and inserting it carefully, bit by bit, into every external crevice—an operation which was called *fogging the wa's*.

The internal accommodation of the better sort of houses generally consisted of a but and a ben, with a bed, sometimes two, in each, and one or two in the trance or passage between them. The cottars' houses were minus the but, except when it was used as an apartment for the fowls to roost in. They got the benefit of the heat of the ben end as well as of its smoke, neither of which seems to have disagreed with them, for they were always the plumpest and fattest that were so housed.

The yearly round of occupation of the crofters or small farmers was as follows. As soon in the spring as practicable the *pleuch* was *streekit*, i.e., put to use. The horses, unaccustomed to such work, were restive, and generally required two or three *loons* to guide them and make them draw evenly; but loons were plentiful in those days, and though they did not like the work it kept them out of mischief. A strong man held the wooden plough, and at

times it required all his strength; for though a light implement that he generally carried on his shoulders to and from the field, it was very vicious when put to work, jumping from side to side, often quite out of the furrow, and sometimes tossing the holder upon his back on the *red* land, wherever its course was opposed by a big stone, or kicking up its heels when it encountered a *yird-fast* one to the serious danger of his ribs. Ploughing was therefore no child's play, nor an artistic operation such as it is now, for there were no straight furrows but windings along crooked baulks, into shapeless gushets and round jutting rocks and huge boulders. The first portion of the spring work was called the *ait seed*. It was generally completed before any other was undertaken. Then followed the *bere seed*, a most important piece of work, especially in the smuggling days, but going out of fashion ere the 'thirties began. The land for this crop required manuring; hence the saying, "When the muck's a' oot the bere seed's done." Potatoes and turnips came next after a short interval, but though so important now they were not, especially the latter, of much account then, and did not require, at least did not get, much of the men's work. These operations finished, the "labouring" was said to be done. For the rest of the summer, except for a week at the moss and two or three days at making the hay and clipping the sheep—all occasions of rural festivity—most of the younger men engaged themselves where work was to be got; the others amused themselves the best way they could, doing what they called *jots*, but really spending their time in idleness. The women and children did all the rest of the field work till harvest came on, and most of it even then. The reaping was wholly done by means of the toothed hook, later on by the scythe hook, and seldom indeed did a full-grown

man bend his back so far as to use even the one or the other. Often the women went to their knees in the process of *shearing*, and the work was so carefully done that not a straw was dropped nor one misplaced in a sheaf. It was the men who built and thatched the stacks, and in so doing they were supposed to have contributed their part of the harvesting. It was not till the 'forties had well begun that the scythe in its most primitive form, that is, with the long sned, was employed in reaping oats. For years after it was considered unsuitable for bere or barley, though for some time before it had been used to cut such patches of artificial hay as were then grown. The harvest completed, the men laid themselves up for the winter, seeking amusement by gadding about the country—*straiking*, they called it—and by ball shooting by day and ball dancing by night, drinking a good deal of whisky at both. Not so the women. Besides the ordinary work of the household, they took charge of the cattle, and during the long forenights their busy hands never ceased plying the spinning wheel or the knitting wires. Variety in their life work there was little; two or three big balls in the winter, which to them were great events, and a fireside dance for an hour now and again, constituted their amusements. Such was the mode of life in my early boyish days. It may be asked how under such circumstances did the people get food and raiment. The raiment they made for themselves; as to food, even the crofts of from three to four acres, nearly all under oats and potatoes, were supposed to supply enough of these articles for a family of about the same number of individuals, and the small farms supplied whatever deficiency there was in payment of work rendered. Seldom was money given; any one offering it was considered to be rich. All the cottars had a drill or two of potatoes on an adjacent farm given in

exchange for the manure of the ash-pit. A pig was killed at Martinmas and a ham cured for use throughout the year.

I believe the earliest event I retain any recollection of was a cock-fight. I remember nothing about the combat; what is impressed upon my memory was seeing my eldest sister crying bitterly with many tears because the fowl she had presented for the championship had turned out a *fugie*, that is, a cock that would not fight. Her grief was to me a thing never to be forgotten. It was the first and last tournament of the kind I ever saw, and was intended, in theatrical phrase, to be the teacher's benefit day. Every scholar paid him sixpence of entry money, and he got all the fugie cocks. I have a recollection of an adventure I had in the autumn of 1838, the year of the "big storm," as it was called. Though eight years old, I had not been to school, my education having been conducted by my elder sisters; but, being the oldest boy, I had plenty of work to do at home in the shape of herding the cattle and sheep and taking charge of my two younger brothers. The adventure was in this wise. I had been sent with my next youngest brother to look after and bring home some cattle that were pasturing on the hillside about a mile distant. A fearful storm of wind and rain came on. There was no shelter anywhere but in the "howe burn," the deep den cut in the mountain side by an impetuous torrent. Thither we were all, boys and beasts, soon driven by the violence of the tempest. The rain became blinding sleet, and the cattle refused to face it. Every time my brother and I attempted to leave our shelter we were driven back by the force of the wind. The snow now began to accumulate above us as the only place where the hurricane would permit it to rest. At last, in sheer desperation, I rolled my little plaid round my brother's neck and dragged him by the hand out into the storm to make for



OLD HOUSES AT WESTER MICRAS.

home. He cried bitterly, but the loud blast prevented my hearing his wailing, though I saw it plainly in his face. We had to cross an open field which had been newly cut. There was not a stook standing, and the sheaves were flying before the wind as if hurled by an army of demons. Three or four times we were dashed to the ground by the blows they dealt us. At last I perceived a human figure approaching, a tall, lanky woman, with a considerable sprinkling of beard on her chin. I knew her, but why she should be there—it was not near her own home—struck me as something very strange. However, she gave us the help we needed, and brought us home. She was the “howdie” of the district, and the occasion of her visit to our mother explained—though we did not then understand it—why we had been so little thought of for a time. The storm is still (1896) remembered as one of the severest that for many years had visited Deeside. Meteorologically considered, the two months beginning with this storm formed a period of an exceptional character. A month later began a snow-storm which, alternating with intervals of keen frost, continued till late in the month of February, attaining a depth never remembered before. All I remember of it is the dreary confinement to the house while the snow was falling; the miserable shifts we were put too for meal, the hand-querns being often in requisition; the cutting of steps or boring of tunnels in the huge mass of drift in front of our dwelling. Then came a memorable day in August. It was the Sunday on which the new Roman Catholic Chapel in Braemar was opened, and the whole population of that persuasion—and they were then very numerous—crowded to the ceremony from all parts of Upper Deeside. From early dawn the elements poured down torrents of rain, which raised the river to a higher level than it had attained since the famous flood of 1829.

It was a grand sight for us boys to watch the trees, logs, fragments of bridges, and other material borne along at headlong speed by the impetuous torrent. Dr. Robertson was wont to tell an anecdote illustrative of the Scotch proverb, "It's an ill wind that blows naebody good." Next day, or the following, as he was riding along, he saw an old man contemplating from the public highway his corn rigs, on which he had been collecting a crop of sheaves. "Do you think, John, you have got about the bulk of your own?" interrogated the doctor. John, still keeping a critical eye on the result of his labours, answered, "I think, Doctor, I have, and if ony odds—raither."

SCHOOL DAYS.

My early school days were quite uneventful. I recollect stealing away two or three times with some neighbouring boys, without parental permission, and presenting myself at school with them. This was in the fine summer days, when the object was more play and companionship than lessons. Winter came on, and then I was sent in regular form. This was, I think, in 1839, when I was eight or nine years of age. I could read a little; but, having up till then used only the Gaelic language at home, I must have felt rather awkward at first among boys who spoke only English—nothing else was spoken at school. For the rest of the year—from April to November—being the oldest boy in the family, I was kept constantly at work, often much harder work than was suitable for my years; or I was put to herding—an occupation I always detested. At school, I was not fond of play, and merely took part in the usual games that I might not appear singular.

The Presbyterian Examination was then the great field day of the school year, when prizes of books, as rewards of

merit, were awarded by competition to the best scholars. This took place annually, in March or April, after which only those (a small number) whose services were not required at home remained at school.

On one of these occasions the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge offered a set of prizes to be competed for by the four schools in the district, namely, Crathie, Aberarder, Castleton of Braemar, and Inverey. The teachers selected a number of their best scholars, and sent them to the competition, which took place at Aberarder, as being the most central locality. The contest was keen, as on the result depended not only the merit of the competitors, but the reputation of the several teachers. I mention it merely because I can distinctly date from this event my first liking for books and desire for learning. It put into my hands two volumes—"Robinson Crusoe" and Thomson's "Seasons" and "Castle of Indolence." The first inspired a love for reading, the other a desire to understand. From this time every book was a treasure, and as they were few, they were proportionately diligently perused. As I have said, I hated herding; but as that occupation afforded opportunities for reading in fine summer weather—though that made me a worse herd—I took to it more kindly, and about this time it happened that I had a good deal of it to do.

FLOATING.

An event now happened to which I trace one of the banes of my life. Michael Gordon, laird of Abergeldie, having become embarrassed in his circumstances, was obliged to sell a large quantity of his wood, which was purchased by a timber merchant in Aberdeen, of the name of Smith. My father unfortunately entered into a contract with this man to drag the trees to the Dee, and float them in single logs to

Aboyne. I was then a raw boy of scarcely sixteen, but, to save expense, I had to do the work of a strong man in dragging the timber to the river. It was rough work, often not unattended with danger. I have the most unpleasant recollection of it, having had charge of a very intractable and vicious horse. This work lasted for eight or nine months, during which I had neither proper food nor clothing ; for our family were in great poverty at the time, to relieve which was the reason why my father engaged in the business. Before this part of it was finished, I felt my strength giving way, lassitude by day and troubled dreams at night. In short, I was not well, and had a feeling that I was in a manner crushed.

But this was not the worst of my suffering. With the spring thaws came the *floating*. A number of the roughest and most daring hands were engaged, men who, twenty years before, had floated the Braemar timber, and were inured to the work. Though once a means of livelihood to a considerable number of the labouring population, floating timber on the Dee is now so much a thing of the past, never again to be revived, that some account of the mode of operation may be of some interest to antiquaries. First, then, the entire trees had to be tumbled on to the bank of the river, where they were heaped up in great piles. When the thaw came, those nearest the flood were first pushed into it, and sent on their watery journey. This was exciting work. Great care had to be taken lest the loosening of a log below should not bring down those behind, and hurl both logs and men into the raging stream. Several fatal cases of this kind are recorded.

When all the logs have been thus set afloat, the floaters take to their boats and follow them down the river. Conceive it in full flood—and the Dee in this condition is a

wild cataract throughout the whole stretch between Abergeldie and Aboyne—hurrying along on its foaming billows its burden of logs, mingled with masses of floe ice impinging now on one bank and again on another, sometimes getting stranded, but often wheeling round and taking to the stream again, and you will have some idea of the excitement and danger incurred by the men in the boats, four or five in each, whose business it is to refloat the stranded logs, often on rocks where they cannot land, but must strike the log with a long clip as they sweep past, and haul it after them into the current. This is an exceedingly dangerous operation, and one that requires great care and expertness, for, should the log remain fixed, the clip will either be lost or the boat swamped. But the greatest difficulty and danger occur when the logs get jammed up into what the floaters call a *cairn*; that is, when they get heaped together in a confused pile on a jutting rock, on the bank at some sharp turn of the river, or on an island in its midst. They then become huddled together in the utmost disorder, some endwise, some broadside, and so locked that a great part of the logs, though in deep water, remains immovable. To disentangle them is a most dangerous business. The boatmen ply their clips from the side of the water, while other men venture on the floating cairn from the shore, and try to loosen the logs with levers and crowbars. If the river is rising, there is the risk that the whole cairn, or a considerable portion of it, may move off at once, carrying the men along with it, and many lives have been lost when this takes place. Usually, however, there is some warning, and then there is a rush for the land on one side and a flight of the boats on the other.

I had to take my full share of this hard and perilous work, wading in the snow water from morning to night,

without any protection from the cold, and afterwards, wet to the skin all over, walking home in the dark, a distance of some seven or eight miles. This hardship and exposure, so early in life, and continued for months together for two successive years, brought on a gastric catarrh which has clung to me ever since, producing sick headaches and violent stomachic pains, which seem to increase as I grow older, and have lately (1896) caused me much suffering.

To add to our family distress, the timber merchant became bankrupt, and we were left in a worse position than before. Nevertheless I determined to follow up the little education I had got, and for two winters taught an adventure school in the neighbourhood. This stimulated me to rise to something higher. I thought if I could only get as far as a quarter at the Grammar School in Aberdeen, I might come out as a teacher, with some prospect of success. Accordingly I set myself to earn, by hard work, as much as I could in the summer months, teaching this school in the winter. In the following summer I began the study of Latin in the school of Glengairn, then taught by a distant relative, Mr. James Smith, who had just finished his Arts course in King's College, Aberdeen. I continued this study during the following winter, and in the spring at Crathie Parish School, then conducted by Mr. Charles McHardy, as substitute for Mr. Macfarlane, who was abroad in bad health. Mr. McHardy afterwards became minister of Corgarff, and died in 1895.

RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

I am now to relate an important event in my life, which took place about this time. Our whole family, boys and girls alike, had been brought up in the Roman Catholic religion, although our mother remained steadfast to the Protestant

faith. Our most intimate companions were our cousins, who lived just across the Dee, on the Abergeldie estate. They were ecclesiastically exactly in the same position as ourselves, the mother being Protestant and the father Roman Catholic—the family all going with the father to chapel. I mention this to show that it was no home influence that led to my change of religion. I believe neither my mother nor my aunt ever interfered directly or indirectly in the religious upbringing and education of their children. It is possible, however, that in our school life the association with so many Protestant children may have somewhat broken down the rigid distinction which the priests insisted their people should observe between them and their Protestant neighbours in all matters relating to their respective churches. Their excessive strictness overshot the mark. At the instigation of the priests we were forbidden to be taught the Shorter Catechism, either at home or at school. There was even then a Conscience Clause in full operation in the parochial schools; and no objection to our withdrawal from this class was ever offered by the teachers. It merely singled us out as Roman Catholics. But there were so many and so respectable families of this denomination in the parish that it carried with it no stigma. Nevertheless, I at least did not relish being so distinguished, and several others felt as I did.

It was in these circumstances, more than a year before I began to learn Latin, that my thoughts took a serious turn in regard to religion. At first it was not personal religion that troubled one, but a feeling of dissatisfaction with some of the Roman Catholic doctrines, especially that which set the authority of the Church above that of the Scriptures, and the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. Instead of deterring me from their perusal the prohibition under which the priest laid us only made me the more anxious to know

what they contained ; and I now began to read and study the Scriptures not as a school book as formerly, but with an earnest desire to learn from them the way of salvation.

It is not my intention to describe the mental struggle through which I at this time passed. It was severe and protracted, but I bore it in silence and tried to conceal it from every one. It could not, however, altogether escape the notice of some of the family. The priest became suspicious that my learning Latin was not with a view to taking orders in his Church, and spoke to my father on the subject, proposing that I should be sent to Blairs Roman Catholic College. This I did not learn till some years after, when my father, becoming somewhat reconciled to the change, told me what trouble he had got from the priest on my account. Me he persecuted with threatenings and anathema, fulminating the vengeance of his Church against me if I dared to sever myself from her communion. I was in a state of the utmost distress. The terrors of the priest's denunciations were not altogether ineffectual. They did not break down my resolution, but I dreaded what he might do—some dire unknown thing. I had not yet been to confession, and that was now urged upon me with great vehemence, but I had made up my mind not to go whatever might happen. Thinking no time was to be lost, he urged my father to send me on a particular day, and, if necessary, to use extreme means to compel me to attend. This brought matters to a crisis. When my father asked me to accompany him, I informed him of the state of my feelings, and that I had, after much thought, resolved to leave the Church of Rome. He was very angry, but not so violent as I feared he would be. The truth is that he had seen the change in my religious sentiments for some time past, and was not wholly unprepared for the declaration I had now made. I had resolved to

soothe him by paying him even greater regard and affection than I had done before, and I was not unsuccessful ; for as one after another of the family followed my example he was less and less vexed at their desertion of his Church. In fact, before his death he had become at heart very much a Protestant himself.

I do not intend, even in an autobiography meant to be candid, to say anything regarding my personal religious sentiments and struggles. These I hold to be too sacred for any eye to see but the eye of the Omniscient alone. They are matters that concern only the creature and his Creator and Judge. I shall only say that at this time I passed through a season of spiritual trial and conflict with myself that was very hard to bear.

STRUGGLING ON.

In the month of August, 1846, there occurred one of the most violent and destructive thunderstorms ever experienced on Upper Deeside. I have given some account of it in "Deeside Tales."* The mountain torrents bursting their bounds covered much arable ground with gravel and mountain débris several feet in depth, and swept away some bridges. Employed by the road trustees, I wrought hard at repairing this damage, and in a few months found myself richer by a few pounds, with which I proposed to carry out my project of educating myself for a session at the Grammar School. With this view, and still further to increase my little store, I continued to teach the side school I have mentioned during the following winter, and in the spring went to reside with a sister near Ballater, to attend the school there during the summer months.

* See Burn of Torgalter.

Ballater was then very different from what it is now, small in comparison and more homely in its manners. The school was then taught by the Rev. James Smith, a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, a man of fair abilities, well known in the district and not a little esteemed by all classes of the community; but getting old and having offices besides that of schoolmaster, he often entrusted the junior classes to the care of his more advanced pupils. This task was generally laid on me; and it is needless to say that my own studies made but little progress. At least, I got little help from my teacher.

Being at home assisting at the harvest and other work about the new and enlarged farm on which my father had just entered, and seeing some prospect of getting a session at the Grammar School, which a year ago had been the summit of my ambition, I employed every spare minute in studying Latin and learning a little Greek. Some higher attainment began now dimly to loom in the distance. At this time I received not a little assistance in my studies and much encouragement to aim even at a session at college from a former school fellow, now living with his father on a neighbouring farm, and preparing to enter the magistrand class in King's College, Aberdeen. He was some years my senior, and had been little at home since my early school days, so that our companionship had not been very intimate; but now there sprang up between us a friendship which has lasted unimpaired to the present hour, and done much to shape the whole after course of my life. He is now (1896) the Rev. George Davidson, LL.D., the respected minister of Logie-Coldstone.

The following winter (1847-8) I went to Ballater School again, this time avowedly to teach, and receive in return private lessons and board and lodgings in the schoolhouse.

I had few or no companions outside the school, but there were there several pupils—some of them girls—of about my own age, and quite equal to me in some branches of learning. The girls teased me unmercifully, but were always easily forgiven.

Among the elder members of Ballater society there was only one outstanding figure, and he was a surgeon. Dr. Sheriffs, as he was called, though he was not an M.D., was a shrewd headed, rough mannered man, with a moral character not of the highest order, but with a great reputation in his profession, much knowledge of the ways of the world and skill to use it to his own advantage. If not much respected he was greatly feared, and he ruled in Ballater without a rival. Some years before he had attended me during an attack of typhus fever, and I had now the rare fortune to stand pretty high in his good graces, which was of some advantage to me.

The Rev. James Smith, M.A., schoolmaster, with whom I lived, was a man of totally different life and character. As I have already said, he filled many offices besides that of schoolmaster. He had been Clerk to the Justices of the Peace in the smuggling days, to the Parochial Heritors, to the Road Trustees, to the Savings Bank Managers, and to the Kirk Session; and afterwards Inspector of Poor, Collector of Rates, and Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. These offices brought him into contact with both high and low. A frequent guest at the tables of the former, and a prominent person at all public meetings and parties, he had a wide reputation as a man of business and of great social qualities. No man had a greater fund of anecdotes nor a happier way of telling them, which made him a great favourite with the ladies, of whose society he was very fond, and to which he devoted much of his time. He was

of a happy temperament, disposed to be at peace with all mankind; yet there was one man who constantly crossed his path and poisoned his cup of pleasure. This was Dr. Sheriffs, of whom he stood in dread, and who missed no public opportunity of treating him with ridicule; and the doctor was a sarcastic dog. When at the Grammar School in Aberdeen he had as a class-fellow, Lord Byron, and often told how he was present on the occasion when the Rector, Mr. Cromar, in calling the catalogue, came to Byron's name and pronounced it for the first, and, as Mr. Smith asserted, the last time, "Domine Byron," laying particular emphasis on the "Domine," and how his pupil, instead of answering "Adsum," burst into a flood of tears. Mr. Smith was early appointed to the school of Ballater, and had been a witness of, and taken a keen interest in its rise and progress, to which he contributed in no inconsiderable measure. It was mainly through his efforts that the bridge, which succeeded the one carried away by the great flood of 4th August, 1829, was subscribed for and built. Indeed, he originated or greatly promoted every public improvement in the village for the long space of 68 years. And now he lies in the quiet Churchyard of Tullich, not yet forgotten by a few scattered over the wide world, to whom he was the great figure of their school days.

As a preacher, Mr. Smith composed neat and effective discourses. At one time he had expectations of succeeding to the church of Ballater, and it was said that he diligently cultivated the favour of the parishioners with this view. But the incumbent, the Rev. Hugh Burgess, lived too long, and saw Mr. Smith too old to permit of this taking place. I knew Mr. Burgess well—a stern, somewhat overbearing man, but withal not unkindly. I joined the last young communicants' class he admitted to the Lord's Table, and thus, in 1848, became a member of the Church of Scotland.

In the summer of that year I obtained work at Balmoral, then getting ready for the reception of Her Majesty and Prince Albert, and in the autumn I was engaged as a ghillie to His Royal Highness. Here I had a good deal of time on my hands, which I employed in prosecuting my study of Latin, seldom going out to the moors or forest without a *Caesar* or some other Latin book in my pocket, to be pored over when my attendance was not required. I was very careful, however, that this should not be known, for I should have been laughed at if it had been discovered.

For the following nine months I returned to Ballater, teaching and being taught—plenty of the former, for I had now most of the work to do, but very little of the latter. I was left almost entirely to my own efforts. It will easily be understood that, under these circumstances, my knowledge of Latin, and still more of Greek, was neither very accurate nor extensive.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

I entered myself here in the 5th, or highest class, in August, 1850, under the celebrated Latinist, Dr. James Melvin. I had not been in this class a week when I found out my great deficiencies, and almost lost heart. During this quarter there was a great influx of the best scholars from the parochial schools of the north of Scotland. These were designated *extraneans*, while those who had come through the regular course of the Grammar School were called *alumni*. The object of both was to be coached up for the Bursary competition, then held in the end of October. No effort of mine could raise even the faintest hope of success at the approaching dread trial of learning. I had made considerable progress, and learned what was of much advantage

to me, my deficiencies, and how far I was behind. This gave direction to my work, in order to be ready by another year. I, however, attended the competition to acquaint myself with the nature of it. It is needless to say I was unsuccessful. The first bursar at King's College was an extranean, now the Rev. James McLauchlan, minister of Inveravon, and the first bursar at Marischal College was Charles Robertson, afterwards ranking third in the competition for appointments in the Indian Civil Service—an alumnus and justly esteemed the best student of his year.

I had now realised my early dream—for the aspiration at first was little more than a dream—of a quarter at the Grammar School, though the attainment had been with small credit, and given less satisfaction. Nothing would content me now but to make a bold push for a college education. For the next nine months I was again engaged as Mr. Smith's assistant in the Ballater School, this time without any promise from him of help in my studies.

My second quarter at the Grammar School then followed, just a year after the first. An extranean I was again, of course, but this time no stranger to Dr. Melvin, the august rector, or to the majority of my class-fellows. From the first I took a respectable position among them. We had what was called a *trial version* every Friday. These the Doctor took home with him, examined each carefully, marking the errors, which in inverse order determined our status in the class for the following week. There were *maximi*, *medii* and *minimi* errors, counting 4, 2 and 1 respectively. I never on these occasions succeeded in making a *sine errore* version, though I sometimes came near to it. Before the end of the quarter there would be from four to ten *sine errore* versions at every trial.

I am not to attempt to describe Dr. Melvin—that has

been often attempted by very able pens, but never, in my opinion, with complete success. Suffice it to say that I regarded him with mingled feelings of awe, respect, affection and fear. No teacher I ever had, and no man I ever knew, made so deep an impression on me: I believe quite as much by the high moral tone of his character as from my admiration of his learning.

THE BURSARY COMPETITION.

This was to me a most anxious, and in many respects the most important, event in my life. If I were successful in gaining a fairly good bursary, there was the prospect of being able to work my way through college, and thereafter take my chance of what good things Providence might cast in my lot. If unsuccessful, my past labour would be lost, and "all my day-dreams of what I then dreamt" would have vanished into thin air, leaving only a dark cloud over my future. I had brooded over this so long and so intensely that my mind had become almost unhinged; and to add to my misery I was struck down a few days before the competition with my indefatigable enemy, gastric catarrh, always brought on by excessive anxiety or excitement. I, however, went to it at Marischal College, and I shall never forget the misery of that day. I could scarcely raise my head from the desk on which I was attempting to write; I had almost lost the power of thinking, my mind was nearly a blank. I sickened once or twice, but put in such papers as I had been able to write, and went home to my lodgings in a state bordering on despair.

A few days after there was to be at King's College a competition for the McPherson bursary—value £20—limited to Gaelic speaking students; and, being a little recovered in health, I went to it and sat down with other six

competitors to work the papers presented to us. In giving their decision the examiners said they had much difficulty in deciding between the first two, and regretted not having two bursaries. This was small consolation to me who was finally assigned the second place. The declaration of the bursaries at Marischal College was made from the Town House that same night at 11 o'clock. Almost all the competitors had been waiting for hours in the street to hear their fate. I did not go, I knew mine already, and I was indeed too ill to be out so late. I learned, however, that I was in the list of bursars, but very far down. It turned out to be a £7 10s. bursary, out of which the class fees and other dues had to be paid. I saw I could not maintain myself for the five months of the session on the remainder, and was now possessed of no means of my own, and had no hope of obtaining any. In this difficulty—I might say despair—I resolved to apply for teaching, and, knowing that Dr. Melvin had great influence in procuring such, and believing that he had some favour for me, I plucked up courage to call upon him and tell him exactly how I was circumstanced. He received me kindly, and asked me to call upon him again next day. I did so, thinking there was now some prospect of finding teaching. He advised me to wait on Dr. Cruickshank, Professor of Mathematics in Marischal College, at a certain hour, which I punctually did, still thinking of teaching. The professor told me that he had seen Dr. Melvin, and it so happened that there was a lapsed bursary of the value of £14, which, after examination, might perhaps be obtained for me on resigning my competition bursary of £7 10s., but that it only ran for three years, whereas the one I was entitled to was for four. To me this offer was like life from the dead. I accepted it gratefully, was examined, passed, and so entered on my college career.

COLLEGE: SESSION 1851-2.

I took a fairly good position in the class from the beginning; and though much troubled with illness consequent on early hardships, comfortless lodgings and poor fare, I worked hard to maintain this position throughout. My success was doubtful. A large number of my class-fellows were the *élite* of the Grammar School, the Gymnasium, and all the best schools in the north. I formed friendships with many of them which death only has severed. Their memories are even now the most pleasant recollections of my youth.

About the middle of the session, I obtained some private teaching, for which I received a guinea a month for six hours a week. It was a mistake; but *nullam habet necessitas legem*. The compulsory classes of the session were only two, Latin and Greek. For the former I was pretty well prepared, but for the latter my preparation was almost wholly limited to my own private study—not very satisfactory it may well be supposed. The Greek Chair was then held by the Rev. Robert Brown, D.D., well read in the language, but getting old, and somewhat absent-minded. His kindly disposition was sometimes taken advantage of by the more idle and frolicsome of the students. He occasionally gave lectures on the manners and customs of the ancient Greeks, in which there were so frequent references to those of the Dorians that among the students the worthy Doctor was only known by the appellation of *The Dorian*. He gave us plenty of work to do at home, which only a few honestly did, the others finding the means of copying their exercises. The fraud was seldom detected, which gave rise to the suspicion that the exercises were not very carefully, if at all, examined

by the professor, and justified the complaint of the wit of the class that—

“Oft times the partial Dorian,
By mistake or by design,
Gives better marks to idle rogues
Who copy theirs from mine.”

The Professor of Humanity was a very different man. Under him we read a good deal in various authors. It was, however, not Latin that we were principally taught, but a kind of universal literature interspersed with racy criticisms and eloquent recitations from the chair, which kept us spell-bound during the hour of our attendance. We thought him at times a little eccentric, but we all loved him. He was also a poet in his own way, and by offering rewards for compositions in verse on some subject or event of which we had been reading, he sought to infuse some of his own talent into us. I earned one of these rewards. He had a wonderful power of rivetting our attention, and never required to exercise discipline by fine or otherwise, and was always in good humour and high spirits. Such was John Stuart Blackie—afterwards Professor of Greek in the University of Edinburgh—a man well known in the literary world, genial and amiable, a Scotsman to the very core, and latterly even a Highlander in spirit if not also in language, and the founder of the Celtic Chair in the Metropolitan University.

We were the last class he taught in Aberdeen, and, whether he flattered us or not, he at parting told us, the best. His appointment to the Edinburgh Chair, which took place in March, was the great event of the session. We were all duly apprised, weeks before, of the eventful day, and told that a white flag would be displayed from his lodgings in Union Street next morning if he were successful.

Of course he received an ovation, and there was little Latin taught in the class that day. I may here state that from the acquaintance then formed there sprang up between the professor and myself a friendly intercourse which lasted till his death in 1895.

After the close of the session (1852), having obtained some more teaching, I remained in town till the end of June, attending at the same time a class in Mr. Gray's Mathematical School, in Little Belmont Street, for about six weeks, in preparation for my second session. I had been doing a little at mathematics privately, but had not made much progress. There were also summer readings in Greek and Latin to prepare, on which all bursars had to pass an examination when entering their second session. Failure to pass meant loss of bursary. This demanded most of my spare time, and to it I mainly devoted the remainder of the summer, living at home, and doing what work I could on the farm, and sometimes taking on little jobs to eke out my scanty means.

SECOND SESSION, 1852-3.

I had no difficulty with the pass examination, and when fairly under way in my new classes my first care was to find some teaching. By the help of friends, I found employment for two hours a night, for which I had two guineas a month. I thus committed the mistake of the previous year. These two hours I could ill spare from my own studies, and they entailed on me sitting up late at night, or rather till early in the morning, in order to overtake my college work, which for me was much harder than that of the first year, being three classes instead of two, viz., Higher Greek, Mathematics and Natural History. These were

compulsory, Chemistry and Higher Latin being optional. I did not take these.

I have already described Dr. Brown and his manner of conducting the work of his class. The doctor's authority was even less respected in the Senior Class, and the order was far from good. He often imposed fines, sometimes as high as half-a-crown, which were generally promptly paid; but the doctor, instead of appropriating them, laid them upon his desk, whence they generally found their way back to the pockets of the culprits, and by next morning the good doctor had forgotten all about the offence and the fine.

In the mathematical classroom we were confronted by a man who did not need to fine or even reprove a student. One look was sufficient to quell the most audacious. It would be difficult adequately to describe Dr. Cruickshank. It was not alone sternness of manner that kept us so much in awe of him. It was a feeling that to offend him would bring about some dire calamity of the nature of which we could form no conception. It was a mixture of respect and awe and terror with which we regarded him during our first year under him. The element of terror wore off the second year, but the respect and awe remained. One of the best of his students, the late Colonel Duncan, M.P., told me that, after having been absent from the country for twelve years, he met Dr. Cruickshank on the street, and all the feelings with which he regarded him in the classroom came back upon him, and he could not divest himself of them, notwithstanding the doctor's efforts at familiarity. It was different with me. I had never been so long out of his sight, and he had been my friend in need. While a student, I had been deeply impressed with respect for him, but instead of fear I had a feeling of gratitude, more powerful than fear, to make me desire to do my best to please him in the only way in

which he could be pleased, by doing my duty as a student. In after life, I found him both pleasant and sociable. He was a kind of Dr. Johnson in manner, and I think also in character. Deeply learned in many subjects besides that of his own chair, like him he spoke with authority. Johnson was burly and corpulent; Cruickshank—or “Cruikie” as we called him when out of sight and hearing—was long and lank, but both had the same ungainly gait in walking.

It may be here noticed that in conducting the work of the class during the first year he never condescended to call any student by name, but, “next student,” or thus, “the fourth student in the 3rd faction.” But in his senior class we were called by name, thus—“John Michie”; and in the select class, consisting of the Simpson and Boxill bursars with three or four others of his best students who attended in their magistrand year, our Christian names were dropped and their places supplied with “Mr.”

The Natural History class was taught by Mr. James Farquharson (now the Rev. James Farquharson, D.D., Minister of Selkirk), who read to us the lectures of Professor McGillivray, who had died in the previous year. The patrons of the chair had left it vacant for two years, the emoluments, less a fee for the lecturer, being paid to Mrs. McGillivray. Mr. Farquharson, though thus not in the position of professor, secured our attention and regard. He had been one of Dr. McGillivray’s most distinguished students, a son of the Manse, his father, an eminent botanist, having been minister of Alford. The month of February being this year very fine, we had several Saturday excursions to Rubislaw and the Cove, collecting specimens and enjoying much free intercourse with each other. These laid in me the foundation of that predilection for the study of geology, which I have ever since retained. Although I felt the work

somewhat hard, I believe this was to me the most enjoyable of all my sessions at college. What with my bursary and private teaching, I was able to live in a little more comfort than I had done the previous year, and I was less troubled with illness.

I went home to prepare for next session towards the end of June. At intervals during the summer I rambled much among the neighbouring hills, and made two excursions which I think worth recording, the first by myself soon after my release from town.

I had been several times to Lochnagar, both in company and alone, and had visited most of the mountains and crossed all the passes between the Capel and the Cairnwell; but had never explored the grand group of the Cairngorms with Ben Muicdhuì at their head presenting such an imposing and attractive panorama from Lochnagar and the other summits of the main range of the Grampians. I determined, therefore, to invade their solitudes and acquaint myself with their topographical and geological characters. With this view I took up my quarters with an old acquaintance, a gamekeeper in Inverey. Here I stayed a fortnight, and every day was spent among the mountains and glens—sometimes both day and night—seeing occasionally a gamekeeper but no other human creature in my wanderings, for there was no Cairngorm Club in those days to incite its members to dare these high altitudes at all seasons of the year. I shall describe one of these excursions, and it may be taken as a sample of several others.

Having provided myself with a supposed sufficiency of cheese and oatcakes, a knapsack, a pocket compass, a chisel and hammer, and a highland plaid, I set off from Inverey at sunrise on, I think, the 24th June, 1853. The course I took was along Glendee to Pol Dee, then northward through the

narrow pass between Scur-mor and Ben Bhrotan, northward still by the infall of the Guisachan, the Devil's Point to the junction of the Dee and the Garchory, loitering a good deal by the way to examine every interesting object that came under my observation. At the Garchory I took some pains to ascertain which of the two streams contributed the larger volume of water—the Garchory Burn or the Gruamach Pass Burn, *i.e.*, the Larig Burn. There was no doubt that at this time, and I should think at all seasons of the year, the Larig branch of the Dee contributed the larger volume, and on this account is entitled to be held as the infant Dee. Topographically viewed also, the Garchory, like the Guisachan, is of the nature of a tributary. I therefore stuck to the Larig Burn as still the Dee, and sought some amusement in calculating when I should be first able to leap across it. I might have succeeded earlier than I did; but I did not care to risk a failure. I succeeded at a spot about half a mile beyond the junction with the Garchory. I now considered the stream vanquished, and mentally compared it with the great volume that passes my native abode, coming to the conclusion that the river gathers more water in the first 15 miles of its course than in any other 30 miles of it, and that before it reaches Invercauld it has at least half as much water as it discharges into the sea. Two miles north from the Garchory it issued from a great mass of frozen snow, much as Swiss streams leave the glaciers. Of course, I did not then know what that was like, but I fancied it, and I in after years verified my fancy. This snow bridge was about 300 yards broad. I crossed on it several times, and this was in the end of June. It occurred under a great brow in the Pass, into which a vast quantity of snow had drifted during the winter. Beyond the brow, the stream, though still considerable, was often hid among the rough boulders of

granite that obstructed its course. From this to the Pools, or Wells of Dee, a distance of about a mile, the Larig is narrow and exceedingly rough. The pools are two in number, each about 4 yards in diameter. They are situated almost on the watershed in the very heart of the Pass, and are fed by streamlets issuing from springs high up on Ben Muicdhui and Braeriach. I disturbed a flock of ptarmigan that had gathered about the pools. They allowed me to approach quite close to them before they took wing. I dined here, and then set out to mount the big Ben, keeping in view the largest of the rills that came tumbling down its precipices. I found it was impracticable to scramble up along the side of it; and had to make a considerable detour to the north. Once above the rocks, I went in search of the highest well, and was fortunate in finding it, drank a very little of its icy cold water, and made for what I believed was the highest point in Great Britain. That reached, I had a glorious view; but almost nothing but hills and mountains were to be seen in every direction. In the extreme distance, north by east, the sea was plainly visible; but neither cultivated fields nor human habitation could I see anywhere. And as for the mountains, they were far too numerous for me to make out by name those in the distance. It seemed as if I could jump across to Braeriach and Cairntoul. Cairngorm looked well, so did Lochnagar and Benabuir, but the other hundreds or thousands seemed as if they were hiding their diminished heads.

As the sun was now nearing the Monadhlià horizon, I made my way towards the *Shelter Stone*, of which I had heard much, but had no very distinct idea where it was to be found. The descent was difficult, and not without danger, but by twisting about a good deal I at last reached the shores of Loch Avon, and soon found my quarters for the night

under the great stone, or rather fallen rock. I cannot say I was comfortable ; it was too cold, but I slept some two or three hours, and was again up with the sun to make another exploration. My bread and cheese had shrunk into very small bulk, and required to be carefully husbanded in case of accidents. I would fain have gone to Cairngorm, but the food supply would not permit of passing another night under the Shelter Stone, and without doing that I could not examine the mountain to my satisfaction. I therefore relinquished the idea, and took up the shoulder of Ben Muicdhuì to Corrie Etchachan. I was greatly fascinated with the stern aspect of this wild corrie, with its dark tarn and overhanging precipices. The feeling produced by the scenery of Loch Avon is that of sheer desolation ; the gloom of Corrie Etchachan inspires awe. I spent some time scrambling round the loch, and picked up a few specimens of small cairngorms ; but from this and other visits to Ben Muicdhuì I have come to be of opinion that it does not so much abound in these gems as some of its neighbours. Very little of the mountain has been searched compared with the old diggings on Benavon and Cairngorm. Whether this is owing to its situation as more distant from the abodes of men, or that there may be some geological reason why the central mass of the group should not be so favourable to their production, I cannot say.

On leaving Loch Etchachan, I followed the outflow into Glenderry. The upper end of this narrow glen presents rather a curious geological feature. The granite mass of the Cairngorms is shattered in a very peculiar way. Rents on a large scale are common in granite ranges, and occur at pretty regular intervals. Glenderry is such a rent, but at the upper end it divides itself into three branches, separated from each other by rugged rocky mountains, the region pre-

senting the idea of a ruined fortress or battered ancient castle, on nature's scale. These three or four corries would in the ice age have given lodgement to an enormous quantity of névé, sufficient indeed even in the last decay of that dreary period to feed a glacier large enough to occupy the glen to its junction with Luibeg. As I descended through it, I saw sufficient traces of glacier action, and at one remarkable place the ice had scooped out a bed for a lake that doubtless existed for ages after the glacier disappeared. This place had a peculiar interest for me, as it had in quite recent times (*c.* 1820) been again converted into a lake by running a dam across the valley, in order to store water to float the timber which then abounded in it to the Dee, and thence to Aberdeen. My father, when a young man, had worked at the "floating," and told me many stories of the life the men led, of hairbreadth escapes, and fatal accidents that sometimes befel them. The sun was now setting, but it was not dark, and I had time to follow the Lui and mark the many linns—some of them very picturesque—in its way to the Dee, through which I waded, and got at midnight to my quarters at Inverey. [*End of the Autobiography.*]

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The latter part of Michie's manuscript is written in a tremulous hand, and though his memory of the past was still obviously fresh and vivid, and he had reached only the threshold of his career, he laid down the pen. The rest of his life may be briefly summarized. After graduating in the spring of 1855, he spent some months teaching in Dyke Academy and in Milne's Institution, Fochabers, and towards the end of the year was appointed parochial schoolmaster of

Logie-Coldstone, which post he held for the next twenty-one years. Like many country schoolmasters of those days he kept the possibility of the ministry in view, and during his early years at Coldstone attended the Divinity classes at Aberdeen University, and became a licentiate of the Church of Scotland. His ambition in life would have been completely satisfied had he obtained a charge, but during the days of patronage his efforts in this direction were fruitless.

As a teacher, Michie was highly successful. Without effort, his individuality made a strong impression on his pupils; and, at a time when Spartan methods of maintaining discipline and instilling knowledge were still by no means obsolete, he proved that there are other ways of reaching the hearts and minds of children. Further, being himself a life-long student he continued in natural sympathy with the developing minds of learners of all ages. The period of the 'sixties and 'seventies, subsequent to the passing of the second Reform Bill, was marked by a wave of enthusiasm for education, or, perhaps, more accurately, general information, which gave rise in towns to the establishment of Mechanics' Institutes and similar institutions, and in the rural districts to the starting of debating and mutual improvement societies. With this movement Michie was in full sympathy, and during the winter months, in his own and neighbouring parishes, he frequently gave lectures, or courses of lectures, on geology and allied sciences, or on his summer rambles at home and abroad, to which the absence of domestic ties allowed him to devote many of his vacations. The duties of a teacher, according to his conception of them, were not confined to the schoolroom. He made it his business, as it was his pleasure, to encourage and assist all the intellectual activities of a somewhat remote and sparsely populated district. The high regard in which his work, both professional and personal,

was held, was attested by his receiving in 1876 a unanimous call to the newly formed *quoad sacra* parish of Dinnet, some miles from Coldstone, where the remainder of his life was spent. In 1903, the growing infirmities of age rendered necessary an application to the Presbytery to be relieved of the active duties of the ministry, but he enjoyed his retirement for less than a year, dying in the manse of Dinnet on 21st January, 1904. By his own wish, he was buried in the old churchyard of Glentanar, within sound of the river Dee, whose murmur he had known and loved from infancy.

Apart from his educational and ministerial work, Michie, like many another country schoolmaster and minister, was mainly interested in local history and antiquities and in some branches of science. He had, however, what is less common, a strongly marked natural inclination towards committing the results of his investigations and enquiries to literary form. He began at College to follow this practice of composition and continued it all his life, even when much of what he wrote was evidently never meant to see the light of print. Brought up to hear the language of the Gael at his father's fireside, he was reared in an atmosphere where his Celtic passion for the past was fed on tales "of the days of other years." These he began to collect in his boyhood, and never lost an opportunity of adding to his stores of legend and tradition. He had a fine eye for the picturesque both in nature and in men, and a specially affectionate regard for the local setting and circumstance of the romantic incidents of the past. His feelings towards the representatives of the great families associated with the history of Deeside were marked by a warmth of devotion that was apt to be misunderstood by those who failed to recognise how much of the old Highland sentiments of loyalty and affection still survived in his nature.

Michie's equipment, therefore, for antiquarian and historical work was based on the excellent foundation of an intimate acquaintance with the field of local traditions, thanks to the keen appreciation which he had of the interest and value attaching to this kind of material. At the same time he was a diligent student of books, and the most characteristic productions of his pen may be described as a happy blend of elements derived from both sources. He was in no hurry to seek publication, and it was not till 1872, when his powers were ripe and his matter thoroughly assimilated, that his first work, the "Deeside Tales," appeared. It was written off rapidly, and *con amore*. Every page of it bears evidence of the author's gusto and relish for his subject, and though he wrote much afterwards, this continues to be his most popular book. His idea of illustrating the different types of the society of the past by sketches of individuals drawn from life is a felicitous one, and variety in the incidents selected for narration is skilfully attended to. The humorous, the mysterious, the romantic, and the tragic all find a place in his pages. His writing is characterized by easy grace and simple dignity. While the level of expression never rises very high, at its lowest it does not fail to meander with a certain amount of pleasurable charm.

The district where Michie lived and the surrounding neighbourhood are interesting ground to the archæologist. They abound in prehistoric antiquities of various kinds, "eird" houses or underground dwellings, "Druidical" circles, inscribed stones, hill forts, and generally in those remains of the vanished past, the problems and puzzles of which are at once a fascination and a field of contention to the antiquarian mind. The shores and waters of Loch Kinnord had yielded a considerable crop of relics to the collector for many years, and in 1859, owing to a reduction

of its level by drainage operations, some important finds were made. Among these was a specimen of the pre-historic log-canoe. Much interest was aroused, and the district became for a time the focus of keen antiquarian activity. Michie's enthusiasm took fire, and he threw himself with ardour into the investigation of the archæological problems presented. Besides contributions to the Society of Antiquaries, the outcome of his studies was the "History of Loch Kinnord," published in 1877. Although his primary motive in this book was to treat of the archæology of the district, he digresses into various bypaths, as accident or inclination leads. Geological problems are touched upon, place-names are explained (rather unhappily in most cases, as later Celtic scholarship would say), genealogy and family history are strong attractions, and such subjects as Byron's boyish loves, or even the popular fireside story pleasantly diversify the exposition of the main theme. It may here be mentioned that at his suggestion the late Sir William Brooks erected close by the loch a neat little building intended as a museum for the preservation of the antiquarian relics, geological specimens and other objects of interest. It was to Michie a cause of bitter mortification that, owing to changes in the proprietorship, this project was not ultimately realised.

Whether the archæological views advanced in "Loch Kinnord" would always be accepted by experts to-day may be doubtful. The subject is notoriously obscure, and much is still being done towards its elucidation. His researches at any rate brought to light many new and interesting facts, and if his explanations did not in every case command assent, they provoked discussion and further investigation. His reputation as the best authority on the antiquities and history of Upper Deeside was established, and led to a large

correspondence with friends and acquaintances, or, it might be, casual enquirers, whose tastes and pursuits were similar to his own. One of the most amiable features of his character was his extreme readiness to put his knowledge at the disposal of those who might solicit his advice or assistance. The list of names which occur from time to time among his letters is practically co-extensive with his fellow-workers in the north-east of Scotland, and includes many that are known in a wider field, such as Miss MacLagan, author of "Hill Forts and Stone Circles"; Dr. R. Angus Smith, author of "Loch Etive and the Sons of Uisnach"; Professor Rhys, of Oxford; Sheriff Nicholson, the Gaelic scholar; Mr. R. E. Prothero, the editor of Byron's letters; the Earl of Southesk, author of "Ogham Inscriptions," and others.

One of the earliest of his antiquarian friends was Andrew Jervise, author of "Land of the Lindsays," to whom Michie was able to give considerable assistance for the Deeside parishes in his "Epitaphs and Inscriptions." In collaboration with Dr. William Alexander, of the *Aberdeen Free Press*, he wrote the memoir of Jervise which is prefixed to the second volume of the "Epitaphs" (1879). Between the authors of "Johnny Gibb" and "Deeside Tales" a deep and lasting friendship subsisted. Alexander was a constant visitor at the manse of Dinnet, and their summer holiday was often spent together in tours in various parts of Britain and on the Continent. To the *Free Press* Michie was a frequent contributor for many years. Many of his reviews of books, when his own special subjects were dealt with, might take rank as original essays; and occasional articles on topics of antiquarian interest appeared from his pen.

In 1897, his "History of Logie-Coldstone" was issued in connection with the occurrence of a bazaar there. Though the book was hurriedly prepared, and, as regards the greater

part, is largely a compilation from printed sources, the materials are skilfully selected and woven into a picturesque and agreeable narrative.

His largest work, to which several of the later years of his life were devoted, was the "Records of Invercauld," published by the New Spalding Club in 1901. To deal with the large mass of family papers that were entrusted to him for examination was a formidable undertaking for his advanced years and somewhat enfeebled health, and in certain respects the book might be improved upon, particularly in the matter of plan and arrangement. It may be remarked, too, that the younger school of genealogists and writers of family history have set a higher standard of accuracy than their more easy-going elders either practised or felt the need of; and Michie was not trained in the newer methods. Living as he did at a distance from a good library, he was not always sufficiently acquainted with the results of later research. When all deductions, however, are made, the book remains an invaluable contribution to the history of the highlands of Deeside, and a storehouse of material from which future writers will draw. The imperfections of execution of which we have spoken are amply atoned for by the unique advantages which Michie brought to his task. In such a work, where the records extend over centuries and embrace all kinds of documents, demands are made on the editor's knowledge in the most various directions. Unless he is at home in the district with which he is dealing, familiar with its topography present and past, with the history of its people, their language, agriculture, manner of life, and so forth, he will be continually at fault. All this Michie knew better than any other man of his time; nor should we omit to mention, as one of the attractions of the book, the note of personal interest, arising from the affection which he felt as a native of Crathie for the race and name of Farquharson.

Next to his antiquarian and historical work, he devoted considerable attention to the study of geology. He wrote and lectured on geological subjects, and, though he never published anything in this line, at one time he projected and commenced work on a somewhat extended study of the physical features of the Dee basin. His interest, however, in the history of men was greater than in nature, and he wisely allowed the superior attraction to prevail. Like the man in *Boswell*, who tried hard to be a philosopher, but "always found cheerfulness breaking in," Michie would have found it difficult, even if he had wished it, to remain a mere geologist. "The Burn of Torgalter" in the present volume is a good illustration of the combination of science and story, which he found most congenial, and which he used with great effect in his popular lectures. While he lived at Coldstone, his scientific studies were no doubt stimulated by the society of his life-long friend and neighbour, Dr. Davidson, the minister of the parish. Davidson was deeply interested in certain branches of natural science, particularly meteorology and botany, and one of his discoveries attracted much attention at the time. He was fortunate enough to recognise the presence in a moss on the Dinnet moor of a large deposit of kieselguhr, an exceedingly uncommon infusorial earth which is used in the manufacture of dynamite. In the negotiations that were subsequently carried through for the working of the deposit on a commercial basis, Michie took an active part, prompted by the expectation, which, however, was hardly realised, that a large and flourishing industry might be established in the district.

His position at Dinnet suited admirably his quiet habit of life and literary inclinations. The parish and congregation being both limited in extent and number, his pastoral duties left him with a large margin of leisure for his favourite

pursuits. In early life he was an indefatigable walker. He was rather above the middle height, and his figure was muscular, but light, active, and well proportioned. Nothing gave him more pleasure than rambling among the mountains, and much of his spare time was spent in excursions undertaken for geological or topographical investigation, or for the gratification of the mere aesthetic pleasures of exploration. In later life, however, when the writer was acquainted with him, he seldom ventured far from the manse. He was by nature affable and approachable, and his habitual bearing was one of polished, but quiet, courtesy. In company or in public his *savoir faire* was never at fault; no one could be readier with tactful remark or graceful compliment. With a keen sense of humour, he was an admirable *raconteur*, particularly of those stories that savoured of the soil or were reminiscent of bye-gone days and manners. The anecdotist with a large repertoire is apt, it must be confessed, to become a bore, but Michie kept his faculty in due control, and his stories remained strictly the seasoning, and not the staple, of his talk. In the company of a congenial friend or two, his conversation was in the highest degree delightful—genial, informing, and original. With all his social qualities, however, at the basis of his character there was an essential element of reserve, and his life, though full of happiness, seemed solitary. He never married. The household affairs were attended to for more than thirty years by “Nanse” (Agnes Henderson) with self-sacrificing devotion, and the welcome she extended to his friends was as cordial and personal as if she had been (what in effect she was) a member of the family. The manse is situated on a gravelly plateau a little above, but on the very brink of the Dee, and was then surrounded on three sides by plantations of growing fir trees. The view across the swirling waters of the river

and its rocky ledges to the steep, grassy slopes beyond, thickly clothed with feathery, waving birches, was exceptionally beautiful. His cosy study, lined on one side with books of a dingy, but workmanlike and well-used aspect, and filled from a large oriel window with plenty of sunshine, looked out on this delightful picture. Here Michie was to be found seated at the table with an array of books and papers around him. He would readily discuss any piece of work on which he happened to be engaged, but in a characteristically restrained and undemonstrative manner. Visitors from a distance anxious to learn anything about the neighbourhood—and in the summer months they were numerous—always found him accessible, and his stores of local knowledge freely at their command.

The autobiographical fragment emphasizes—perhaps to an undue extent—the *res angusta domi* of his early upbringing. At the same time it exhibits an impressive picture of steady and unsubduable resolution in the face of adverse circumstances. Among the peasantry of Aberdeenshire and the north-east of Scotland as a whole the ambition to succeed in life would, if ever conceived, remain in most cases in the realm of dreams but for the opportunities afforded by the University of Aberdeen, which has rendered an incalculable service to the country by extending the horizon of life's possibilities. In this aspect the case of Michie is only one of thousands.

In most essentials he may be said to have attained the limits of his ambition, and among the many gratifications of his career none gave him more pleasure than the success which his writings met with, and the general recognition that he had done something of value for the history of Deeside. His life may be contemplated with the satisfactory feeling with which one regards a completed whole—rather hard

bestead at the outset, vigorous and strenuous in mid-career, and towards the close (as is befitting) calmer and quieter, but at all stages well filled with a fruitful activity.

J. M. W.

DEESIDE TALES

DEESIDE TALES

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

"Faces and footsteps, and all things strange."—*Mrs. Hemans.*



THE remark has often been made that the progress of civilization tends to reduce individual peculiarities, and assimilate all men to a common model; and there can be no doubt that the circumstances of a primitive state of society are more favourable to the development of whatever idiosyncrasies nature may have bestowed than those of a more refined condition.

In times such as ours a high and uniform system of education lays hold on the infant character, rubs off its angularities, and, by sheer dint of training, reduces all but the most indocile minds to a certain degree of sameness; and what is thus begun in youth is, through the intercourse of men in business and commerce, perpetuated in riper years, so that his peculiarities must be very strong, or his nature very stubborn, who can resist the combined power of all these influences to cast his character in the common mould.

But in less artificial times nature was the principal nurse of her own gifts, and under her training they not only escaped bondage to the hard and fast lines of red-tapeism, but received encouragement to shoot out and branch off

according to their original bent. They had thus, even before reaching maturity, assumed forms as different from those produced by model schools and Revised Codes, as that of the oak of the forest from the espalier pippin of the orchard.

“The difference is, that in the days of old
Men made the manners—manners now make men.”

At the beginning of the present century, and for long after, the natives of Highland Deeside and its tributary glens were primitive and unsophisticated to a degree of which southerners, who have known them only during the last twenty years, can form but a very faint conception. The aspect of the country has not undergone a greater change—great as that has been—than the feelings, the manners, and even the morals of the people. The visitor of to-day can scarcely believe, as he passes through this beautiful valley, and sees on every hand neat and comfortable farm steadings, fields cultivated after the most approved methods, forests clothing the sides of the mountains and climbing to their summits, and the mansions of the chief, the peer, the prince, and the sovereign bespangling the scene, that little more than half a century ago, with the exception of two or three gentlemen's residences, there was scarcely a white walled house in the district; that the peasants' dwellings could at a little distance hardly be distinguished from the surrounding heath-clad hillocks; that what are now fertile fields were then but uncouth wastes of bog and heather, or at best but narrow poverty-stricken ridges of arable, with huge baulks and heaps of stones intervening; and that a fenced field was not to be seen in the whole country.

To give an idea of the manner in which the small patches, that with some latitude of meaning might be called arable, were farmed, the following in reference to the parish

of Glenmuick is extracted from the *Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, published in 1794 :—

“The ordinary crops are bear and oats, some rye with a mixture of oats, and a few pease. When the weather will permit (which has not been the case for some years) the seedtime is begun about the 20th of March, and finished about Whitsunday. Harvest is begun towards the end of August, and is generally over by the middle of October. Where the soil is late the tenants endeavour to obviate the disadvantage by sowing their bear after their oats without any interval.*

“One bar on improvements in farming is a number of services which the tenants are obliged to perform to the proprietors, such as carting, winning, and leading their peats in summer, harrowing in seedtime, reaping in harvest, and long carriages from Aberdeen and other places.

“Of course the mode of farming has undergone little variation here, excepting on some farms where there are outfields (lands only occasionally cropped), the tenants generally go over all their arable land with dung once in three years. This is followed by two succeeding crops of oats, after which the ground is dunged again, and the same rotation of crops observed as before; and thus the greater part of the arable land here has been treated time immemorial, without rest or any other cleaning than throwing off some of the weeds raised by the harrow in a dry season. Very good crops, however, both of bear and oats, are raised in this way.

* To ascertain when the soil was in suitable condition to receive the bear seed was often a matter of considerable difficulty with these farmers, and in default of a thermometer to test the temperature, they had recourse to various experiments, some of which were more primitive than elegant.

“In good years the parish produces more victual than is sufficient to supply the inhabitants, and affords a considerable surplus of butter, cheese, black cattle, and sheep. The butter and cheese are generally carried to market at Tarland.*

“Creels only are used for carrying both dung and peats. In the lower parts of the parish carts have been introduced, and one gentleman keeps a carriage. In the whole parish there are 170 ploughs, some of which are drawn by eight, some by ten, and some by twelve cattle; some by cattle, and horses before them, and a great many by horses alone. The tenants mostly yoke four horses abreast, the driver, who holds the halters in his hand to regulate their motions, walks before the horses, after his back.

“Agriculture may be said to be only in its infancy here. The country is open, and winter herding is unknown, or, at least, it is looked upon as an intolerable grievance, and therefore not practised. From the time that harvest is over, which is generally about the middle of October, they neither yoke a plough nor do anything about their farms till the seed time comes on, when man, woman, and child are employed in huddling over the work in the most superficial manner—and when the bustle of sowing is over, all concern about the farm is again laid aside till harvest begins.

“Their farms, or rather crofts, are by far too small, few of them exceed twelve, and in general they are from five to eight acres. But whilst I accuse the men of indolence, I should do great injustice to the women if I did not exempt them from the charge, by whose diligence and industry their families are in great part supported.”

* The Cheese Market of Coldstone was the principal fair in the district for the exchange of this article of dairy produce, and generally bore ample testimony to the skill and industry with which that department at least was managed.

Since the above was written, man has been busy with external nature, and has stamped upon it indelible impressions of his skill and refinement.

Yet, though not so patent to the eye, no less wonderful changes have been effected on the social character and habits of the people. Their ideas and opinions are quite different, their feelings and sentiments are now so much the opposite of what they then were, that one frequently hears the rising generation refer with affected horror to the customs of seventy years ago, as if their grandfathers had then only begun to emerge from barbarism and idolatry. The political measures of late years, and still more the great advancement made in education, and the immense spread of knowledge by various means among the humbler classes, have, within a short period, produced the most radical changes in their social habits, their objects of pursuit and interest, and modes of living. This is true of the Scottish peasantry generally, but it is especially true of those of Deeside, on whom these influences and others have been brought to bear with greater force than perhaps in any other part of the kingdom.

It has been already stated that at the close of last century there was not, in the whole of the united parishes of Glenmuick, Tullich, and Glengairn, but one carriage, by which was meant any wheeled vehicle from a gig upwards. Now they are to be counted by scores, and those that pass along the roads by hundreds if not by thousands.

At that time, "men servants' wages for the year was £6; women's ditto, £3." Now they are, for the former, £24; and for the latter, £9; that is to say, men servants obtained one-fourth, and female servants one-third part of what they now receive.

But, whilst admitting the social improvement effected, it may be questioned whether we have not also lost something

in the decay of that chivalrous and generous spirit which distinguished our forefathers. The worship of mammon, which forms so large a portion of the religion of the present day, has in no country or age been favourable to the growth of high and noble sentiments ; and in the interest of truth it must be admitted that even on Deeside that species of idolatry has not failed to produce its usual effect. Whether we be, as a foreign potentate once described us, “a nation of shopkeepers” or not, it cannot be denied that even in our Highland glens the “almighty dollar” has displaced the feudal or patriarchal superior, and usurped his functions.

Take a glance at the old dynasty as it existed only half a century ago. Chieftainship, though legally shorn of its ancient authority, was neither forgotten nor repudiated. Its spirit and all its finer features survived, and to a great extent regulated the relations and intercourse of landlord and tenant. The bondage of military service had indeed given place to the payment of an equivalent in money, and the power of pot and gallows had been commuted into the milder jurisdiction of the Justice of Peace ; but these remnants of ancient authority were sufficient to keep alive in the bosom of the chief the feeling that he was still the father of his clan. His tenants and followers reciprocated the kindly sentiment with a heartiness, that showed anything but a disposition on their part to break loose from their former allegiance.

A mere list of the tenants’ names on the different properties will show how this feeling operated. The lands of Glenmuick and Abergeldie were owned by cadets of the great house of Gordon, and Gordons the occupants were, almost without exception. They considered themselves under the special protection of their proprietors ; and the proprietors had, from a similar feeling towards them, allowed

them the sole tenancy of their estates for generations. By the mutual, though tacit consent of both parties, the patriarchal institution, in so far as it wrought for good, was in full vigour amongst them. Even some points of clanship of questionable benefit were still clung to. These Gordons were rather prone to club together on all occasions and for all purposes, and an injury offered to one brought the whole tribe on the hapless offender. This is not much to be wondered at, since they were all more or less connected either by blood or marriage, frequently by both ties till their inter-relationship had become proverbial. People were wont to say of any inextricable problem, "ye might as soon unravel the sibness o' the Gordons o' Girnock."

The same principle of clanship regulated the occupancies on the other estates, though the tenants were not so exclusively of the clan surname.* From Coilacreich to Monaltrie the Browns held almost as complete a monopoly of the holdings under Invercauld as the Gordons on the other side of the river under Abergeldie. The MacHardies, Mackintoshes, and Abercrombies, all claiming kindred with the Farquharson clan, were equally favoured in the upper glens.

As another instance of the prevalence of clan feeling may be adduced the difference of language in contiguous districts. The Gordons were not of Celtic origin, though they had many Highland possessions, yet such was their influence with their Gaelic speaking tenants, that in the whole district on the right bank of the Dee, from Balmoral to Glenmuick, of which they were resident proprietors, the old language had completely disappeared long before the beginning of the century, while on the opposite bank of the river, where the proprietors were either Celtic or non-resident,

* For the personal names of Highland Deeside, *see* Note I.

the Gaelic continued to be the household language of almost every family down to 1830 at least, a state of things which could not have long subsisted had proprietors been given to change their tenants.* Indeed, it has long been a point of honour with the Invercauld family, and it is believed is so still, never to dismiss a dependant or remove an old tenant, except for some flagrant offence, or the most hopeless incapacity. The honour and influence of the chief was, in the days of our grandfathers, the pride of the tenants; and the prosperity of the tenants was equally the pride of the chief.

This fine feeling is now almost extinct. The relationship between them has become an entirely commercial one. High rents and not high sentiments are what proprietors want in return for the use of their lands. They might have secured both had they exercised their influence, in a kind friendly way, to foster in their tenants habits of industry and enterprise. But in too many cases the enterprising tenant finds himself at the expiry of his lease more harshly dealt with than his neighbour who had done nothing to raise the value of his farm. His industry is turned against himself, no adequate consideration being allowed him for his improvements. "Foolish man!" is the general remark, "he is laying out money for the laird." A single example of such treatment has gone far to damp the energies of a whole neighbourhood, and repeated examples have alienated the kindly feelings of the tenants, who now too generally, and in some cases with too much reason, regard the proprietor in the light of a heartless taxgatherer, if his vexatious proceedings in respect of game preservation have not presented him in the light of a still more unfeeling oppressor.

* See Note II.

From whatever causes, a most unhealthy state of feeling has arisen between them—one which all must regret, but which only one of the parties has the power to remedy, and that in a few things by

“A return to the ways
Of the good old days.”

The question has often been discussed with various objects in view, and consequently with widely different conclusions arrived at, whether the morals of the peasantry have kept pace with the amelioration of their condition, the diffusion of knowledge, and the improvement in arts, or whether there has not been a corresponding retrogression. There are difficulties in the way of estimating the full amount of the change that has taken place in the morals of the people. Session Records deal but with cases of notorious delinquency, and only indirectly supply information regarding the general, social, and domestic life; besides, national or class morality is a plant of slow growth, and rapid decay. There can, however, be little doubt on the mind of any unprejudiced individual, conversant with the details of our Session Records about the middle of last century, that, while in some respects the labouring classes have not made that progress in morality which might have been expected from their advantages, the grosser violations of the decalogue, then so common, have now almost disappeared from among them.

But whether we be better, or better off, than our forefathers, there can be no question that we are very different—so different in many respects, that the following authentic narratives will now with difficulty be believed to relate to persons who have lived, and events which have occurred
ON DEESIDE WITHIN THE CENTURY.

CHAPTER II

THE CATERANS ON DEESIDE

"A band of fierce barbarians from the hills
Rushed like a torrent down upon the vales,
Sweeping our flocks and herds. The shepherds fled
For safety and for succour."
—*Douglas Tragedy.*



THE no period in the history of the Highland clans was their turbulence greater than during the latter years of the reign of James VI. The Government in Scotland was weak, and the chiefs of the north set it almost at open defiance. James's kingcraft consisted in arraying clan against clan, and so, as he thought, quelling their tumultuary dispositions, and checking their depredations without much trouble or expense to the Government. This mistaken policy had the effect, as might have been foreseen, of increasing the bloodshed and spoliation it was intended to prevent, and of stirring up new animosities and sources of strife which eventually broke out into civil war in the reign of his unfortunate son, Charles I.

The head of the great house of Gordon, secretly favoured by the king, though openly discountenanced by his Council, affected almost regal state, and exercised supreme authority over the whole of the north. But when the king's power waned, and that of the Government waxed strong, the Gordons became sulky and disaffected. Their chief was

deprived of his commission of lieutenancy, which was conferred on his Protestant neighbour and kinsman, the Earl of Moray. This was the cause of a deadly feud that soon took the form of Protestant *versus* Catholic, and into which entered all the heat and bitterness of religious as well as political antagonism. Raids were unsparingly made upon the Forbeses, and into the bounds of Moray, and so great was the injury inflicted that it became a saying,

“The gueel, the Gordon, and the hoody crow,
Are the three warst faes Moray ever saw.”

The despoiled clans, unable to defend themselves, applied to the Government for protection, and remonstrances were sent to the Marquis—as yet only Earl—of Huntly calling upon him to restrain the violence of his vassals. As head of the clan he was amenable for their behaviour, but means were found to evade this responsibility. Those who had fattened on the spoils of their enemies, or who had personal wrongs to avenge, were not to be checked in their career of spoil and vengeance by the authority either of the chief or of the law; and, casting off their allegiance, they, in the quaint phraseology of Spalding, “brak loose, and to the hills go they.”

These broken men committed the most frightful deeds of blood and spoil on all whom they fancied to have been in any way the cause of their ruin. When Huntly was again warned by the Government to keep his broken men in order, he virtually replied, “I have no authority over them; they have broken loose from their clan, and you have deprived me of my lieutenancy which alone gave me power to bring such offenders to justice. Restore the lieutenancy, and I will reduce them; without it, I am powerless.” Thus taunted, the Government applied to their accredited representative to

take such measures as were necessary to put a stop to the rapine complained of.

Now, besides the broken men, who were of various clans, there was at this time a whole broken clan—the proscribed Macgregors. They had been bred to the profession of caterans for generations, and looked with suspicion on these new interlopers. Acting therefore on the king's old policy of setting a thief to catch a thief, even the Protestant Earl of Moray did not scruple to make use of them, to get rid of some broken men of the Grants and Mackintoshes who were infesting his lands. Indeed, about this time these Macgregors hired themselves out to all and sundry who required such services, and were considered as a sort of guerrilla "Black Watch," or Highland Constabulary, not inaptly styled "the beagles," to hunt down and apprehend the broken men.

A band of these from the wilds of Rannoch were invited over to Deeside to try their hand on some desperadoes who had broken loose there, and for a time they did good service, not without considerable loss to their own ranks.

But it was the old story of Hengst and Horsa over again. Having performed the business for which they had been engaged, they refused to retire to their own country, and, being now in possession of the mountain fastnesses, they took to their hereditary trade of cattle-lifting with such skill and success, that the whole country around felt the cure to be worse than the disease—that the broken men themselves were not so bad as these "Highland limmers." They knew all the passes, and were acquainted with all the transactions in the parts over which their calling extended. They were thus able to seize any opportunity that offered to carry off a booty. The glens of Cushnie, and the dens of Culbleen were favourite resorts; but when driven from these, as they often were, they always found a safe retreat in Glengairn and

Morven. To each of these places they had assigned a character, very accurately observed and tersely expressed, "Cushnie for cauld, Culbleen for heat, and Clashanraich for heather."

At length, however, Culbleen was made rather too hot for them. It so happened that a man of the name of John Thom, a general favourite in Cromar, was getting married, and according to the custom then prevalent, all his neighbours and well-wishers flocked to the wedding, which, in such cases, lasted for several days, the guests paying for their entertainment and thus often helping to set the bridegroom up in the world. The caterans hearing of this, and finding the country defenceless, assembled their whole force within the forest of Culbleen, whence they made a descent on the neighbouring territory, sweeping away the flocks and herds of all, and setting fire to the homesteads of such as they bore a special grudge against. The indignation of the whole country was roused; a general muster of the inhabitants took place, who, seeing no other means of dislodging these marauders than by depriving them of their concealment and lurking places, set fire to the forest—an event which gave rise to this curious distich, thought to have been a satirical effusion of the cateran muse:—

"Culbleen was burnt, and Cromar harriet,
And dowie's the day John Tam was marriet."

The civil war now broke out, and the Macgregors at once cast in their lot with the Gordons and took up arms under the royal standard. During the Commonwealth they had to keep quiet, if not under close hiding; but it is probable that at the restoration they would again have fallen into their old ways had it not now been the interest of the house of Gordon, which was again in the ascendant, to keep them under proper restraint. Partly as a means of doing so, and

partly as a reward for their services in the late conflict, they received holdings, and some of them even gifts of land in Glengairn and Morven. This had a wonderful effect. It was like putting a troublesome M.P. into office. They became weak as other men. Their houses and possessions rendered them liable to reprisals, and they now began to discover that it was their best policy not rashly to break the peace. There was, however, too much cateran blood in their veins to make them desirable or peaceful neighbours. They and their forefathers had traded in cattle in *various ways*; but though the glens of Morven were a perfect Goshen, and afforded ample scope for the legal exercise of their talents in that trade, yet for long they were sadly liable to an obliquity or obscuration of moral vision as to any obligatory distinction between *meum* and *tuum*, especially in the matter of flocks and herds.

Though vassals of the Gordons, they still owed allegiance to the chief of their own clan; and once, at least, when their military services were required, it was found necessary to obtain the sanction of the celebrated Rob Roy, to an order from the Earl of Aboyne to his tenants of the name of Macgregor before they could be assembled in arms under the command of their landlord.

On another occasion (1715) Rob personally visited his kinsmen on Deeside, and marshalled them under his own standard, this time probably because he meant to play a Moabitish part in the rising.* “The Macgregors to the spoil”

* It was while on this mission to the north that the freebooter paid a visit to a Highland cousin in Aberdeen, who, though little proud of his relation, did not choose to forget the obligations of hospitality, and accordingly entertained him handsomely. Red Rob, as he was called in the low country, was not insensible to the kindness shown him, and after deliberating with himself how he could make an equally handsome return

was to be their *rôle* under Mar; and accordingly, though ostensibly on the side of the rebels, they had determined not actively to oppose the great Argyle, at all events if the victory seemed doubtful. Rob hoped in this manner, on the one hand not to break with Argyle, who he knew possessed the power to ruin him, and on the other to secure an ample

for it, took the father aside one day, and thus addressed him—"James, you have been very kind to me, and I have something to propose to you which I can do for you and yours. You have the finest boy there I ever saw; and you are spoiling him with that trash of books. Give the brave boy to me, and I will take him to the hills and make a fine gentleman of him." With much difficulty the father evaded accepting such an offer without offending the generous, though mistaken feelings that prompted it. He pleaded the youth and feeble health of the boy, and the mother's natural affection to have him under her own keeping and care. In after life the boy became an eminent medical practitioner in Edinburgh, and like many of his family, a great ornament to science. How small are the events that often determine our lives! "James Gregory, who thus narrowly escaped being his kinsman's recruit, and in all probability his henchman, was afterwards professor of medicine in the college. He was rather of an irritable and pertinacious temper, and his friends were wont to remark when he showed any symptoms of these foibles, 'Ah, this comes of not having been educated by Rob Roy.'" Sir W. Scott, who notices this anecdote in the introduction to *Rob Roy*, continues—"The connection between Rob Roy and his classical kinsman did not end with the period of Rob's transient power. At a period considerably subsequent to the year 1715, he was walking in the Castlegate of Aberdeen, arm and arm with his host, Dr. James Gregory, when the drums in the barracks suddenly beat to arms. 'If these lads are turning out,' said Rob, taking French leave of his cousin with great composure, 'it is time for me to look after my safety.' So saying, he dived down a close, and, as John Bunyan says, 'was seen no more.'"

The first of these anecdotes Scott heard from Dr. Gregory, "and the second rests on the recollection of an old man who was present when Rob took French leave of his literary cousin on hearing the drums beat." The occurrences are, however, variously related, but substantially as above.

booty for himself and his followers, whoever should win. This conduct is well stigmatised in the fine old ballad on the battle of Sheriffmuir, composed by the Rev. Murdoch M'Lennan, minister of Crathie :—

“ Rob Roy he stood watch
On a hill for to catch
The booty, for aught that I saw, man ;
For he ne'er advanced
From the place where he stanced,
Till nae mair was to do there at a', man.”

Thus the Macgregors lived on through the revolution period, were out with Dundee at Killiecrankie, and with Mar at or near Sheriffmuir, gradually cooling down from the fever heat of cattle-lifting to cattle-appropriation till the '45. Culloden, however, and the after measures of the Government by a sharp operation tended to cure the moral cataract with which their race had been afflicted, and to administer an antidote against its recurrence in all time coming.

To put a stop to so lucrative a trade as cattle-lifting required vigorous action on the part of the Government ; and to change the dispositions of a people who had long pursued a course of life in defiance of the law of the realm necessitated a continuance of this action for a number of years. During this period the Highlands experienced all the evils of a state of transition. The magistrates enforced the law with much rigour, and those against whom it was directed esteemed it patriotic to resist their action as far as was in their power, and to resent it as they had formerly been accustomed to resent private injuries done to them.

For some years, therefore, the country was in a condition not unlike that in which unhappy Ireland is at the present day. What Fenianism now is to the latter country, the cause of the Stewarts then was to the former ; and many daring

crimes were committed, the perpetrators of which, aided by the sympathy of the general population, often escaped the utmost vigilance of the law. A case of this kind will serve to show the unsettled state of the country, and illustrate some popular superstitions which, now forgotten, then played a considerable part in directing the actions of individuals.

CATTANACH OF BELLASTRAID.

On the left bank of the burn of Logie, Cromar, there was at the time referred to a small hamlet called Bellastraid, the occupant of the principal house in which, called by way of pre-eminence the Ha' o' Bellastraid, was a duine-ualsal, of the name of Cattanach, who probably exercised some sort of superiority over the inhabitants of the clachan. Cattanach had been out in the '45, and for this and some other contraventions of the law he was wanted by the authorities in Aberdeen. He had suffered some little annoyance from the attempts made to apprehend him, but these proving futile encouraged him sometimes to put those in quest of him at open defiance, and earned for him the reputation of being a dangerous and reckless character, so that few cared to meddle with him. At length a messenger-at-arms, named Cuthbert, a man as daring as Cattanach himself, and the terror of evil doers far and wide, was despatched from Aberdeen to secure him alive or dead. With the intention of surprising his victim early in the morning, he made his arrival at the hostelry of Milton of Logie, on the opposite bank of the stream, late at night. Though he preserved a strict incognito, the object of his visit did not escape the suspicion of some who had marked his arrival, and word was sent to Cattanach that he would better be on his guard, as a very suspicious customer had just made his appearance at the inn.

He received the news in bed, expressed the utmost unconcern, but at early dawn was astir. Having carefully loaded his Culloden musket, he swung it behind his back under his plaid, and sallied forth, making straight for the inn and crossing the burn by the stepping stones.

He found the stranger just in the act of issuing from the door way, and addressed him thus—

“Sharp morning this, sir. What may ye be after to-day?”

“Who are you,” replied Cuthbert, haughtily, “that you claim a right to know?”

“I am Cattanach of Bellastraid, and I believe I have a right to know,” responded the other with defiance in his looks.

Seeing that resistance was intended, Cuthbert drew a horse pistol, and aiming at Cattanach drew the trigger. Whether his weapon had been tampered with over night is not known, but a little flash in the pan was all the result.

“Ha, ha, my man,” said Cattanach, “is that what ye’re after? We’ll let you see better ga’an graith here.” So saying he swung round the Culloden musket, and shot the officer of the law through the heart.

Cuthbert fell right across the threshold, and lay there till due notice of what had happened was sent to the authorities.

It was one of the superstitions of the time that, if the perpetrator of a murder could by any chance see through beneath the body of his victim, he would escape the punishment due to his crime. So far from proving always true, this belief had sometimes even led to the detection of the murderer, when he might otherwise have escaped. Cases have been known where, during the funeral of a person who had met his death by foul means, the culprit was

detected by displaying some anxiety to look under the coffin.*

Cattanach, however, had firm faith in the superstitious notion. It shows how great at that time was the popular sympathy with the most criminal of law-breakers, that Cattanach had but little difficulty in prevailing upon one of his neighbours, a man of the name of MacCombie, tenant of the Davan, to accompany him to the inn, and raise the dead body of Cuthbert that he might see under it. Having performed this feat to his satisfaction, he retired to his own house, firmly believing that he had stolen a march on human power and got on the leese of destiny. Next day, however, the intelligence that a small body of dragoons was approaching rather put his confidence to flight; and he took off to hiding with all speed, succeeded in evading all the parties sent against him, and at last found the means of escaping to a foreign land, a circumstance which the superstitious still aver was owing to his having seen under the body of his victim.

From a belief that an evil fate pursued those that took up their abode in a house once occupied by a murderer, the Ha' o' Bellastraid was never afterwards used as a human habitation, but was converted into an outhouse, which, within the recollection of the present worthy tenant, did duty as a barn, and, as he is able to tell, possessed a flight of steps to the door indicative of the height of dignity from which it had fallen.

* This superstition also gave rise to a singular custom, long observed in the Highlands, at the funerals of persons supposed to have been murdered. Before "lifting," the coffin was draped with Highland plaids, which hung from its sides to the ground so that no one might be able to see through beneath it while it was being conveyed to the place of interment.

This state of things could not long continue ; the arm of the law was too strong and too active, and a few years brought round a more settled condition. It may be safely affirmed that before ten years from the battle of Culloden had passed, the smouldering embers of the rebellion had died out, leaving behind it only a residuum of sentiment too ethereal ever again to move to action.

Henceforth the Macgregors were altered men, mostly distinguishable from their neighbours by a more generally marked duplicity of character, and a more romantic and chivalrous style of deportment. Even these traces of their ancient descent gradually softened down, but there were one or two traits that they retained to the last—an innate aversion to manual labour, and a strong desire to act the gentleman. “Shall the sons of Macgregor be weavers?” was as truly the leading sentiment of the race at the opening of the nineteenth as at the beginning of the previous century.*

* For the Deeside Macgregors, *see* Note III.



MORVEN GLEN.

CHAPTER III

MORVEN JAMIE ; OR THE LAST OF THE CATERANS

“What’s bred in the bone is ill to get out of the flesh.”—*Proverb.*



THE previous chapter contains a brief outline of the rise, progress, and fall of the caterans on Deeside, whose depredations are not to be confounded with those more military expeditions, the clan raids and forays.

Though, owing to the circumstances related, the name of the Macgregors is principally associated with these rieviers, they were not much worse than many of their neighbours ; and, on the suppression of cattle-lifting, they almost as readily adopted the manners of civilised life.

It was about this time, when they had made some progress towards respectability of character, that an unexpected outbreak of the old propensity occurred, not indeed in one of their own name, but in a kinsman, and fellow indweller of Morven Glen.

The name of this person was James Coutts, but he was known only under the sobriquet of MORVEN JAMIE.

When Jamie first saw the light is not recorded in any register ; nor have we any account of his upbringing or education. His first appearance on the stage of this world’s

transactions was as a wild Arab, going where and doing what he listed, without much regard to civil or sacred institutions.

Whether these evil ways of his were due to his inheritance in an irrepressible degree of the spirit of his ancestors, or to the disease which moderns call kleptomania, or to some peculiar conformation of cranium or cerebral development explored only by phrenologists, or to early training, or to want making him mad, or to demoniacal possession, or to circumstances over which he had no control, or to circumstances over which he had, neither history nor philosophy has as yet positively affirmed. All that is known for certain is that, having fallen into these irregular practices, his course was no exception to the general rule—

“Steal a needle, steal a preen,
Steal a coo or a’ be deen.”

He only attained notoriety when he had reached the last stage noted in the above quoted proverb. A cow had been stolen, perhaps several cows, from the subjacent lands of Cromar, and suspicion fell strongly on Jamie. He was henceforth a marked man; but as he was known to be of a reckless disposition, people preferred to “flench” rather than fight him; and he was not slow to see the advantage which this opinion of his recklessness had gained for him, and resolved to improve it to the utmost.

A man of the name of MacRobbie, in the Braes of Cromar, found on going into his byres one morning that the stall where his best cow had stood the night before was empty. He succeeded in getting on the footmarks, and discovered that during the darkness his cow had, *nolens volens*, taken to the mountains. He had now no doubt as to the depredator, and resolved to go at once to Morven, and beard the lion in his den. He would fain have got one or two of his neighbours to accompany him, but as none of them seemed to relish the

adventure, he set out alone. Encountering Jamie, in company with two of the Macgregors, he at once charged him with having stolen his cow, and demanded restitution under pain of the severest penalties of the law. Jamie scorned his imputations and threats, and had the effrontery to tell him, that unless he went home immediately and said nothing about his cow to anybody, it would be the dearest business to him he had ever in his life been engaged in. High words followed, and blows would have been dealt but for the interference of the Macgregors.

Finding himself overmatched, MacRobbie departed ; but smarting under his loss and the impudence of the thief, instead of returning home, he went straight to Aboyne Castle to lay his complaint before the Earl. His Lordship assured him that the matter would be looked into, and despatched a messenger to cite Jamie to appear before him to answer the charge laid against him ; but before the messenger's arrival the accused had absconded. The Macgregors, to clear themselves of complicity in his crime, now repudiated all connection with him, and, as he well knew, would gladly have sacrificed him in order to gain the favour of the laird.

The Earl, finding his commands set at nought, procured a warrant for his apprehension, and the myrmidons of the law were soon upon his track. Hunted about in the neighbouring glens, he so skilfully eluded his pursuers that they soon got wearied of the fruitless chase, and gave up the attempt to capture him, contenting themselves with obtaining a formal decree of outlawry against him in the Sheriff Court of Aberdeenshire.

A few days after this, poor MacRobbie and his family only saved their lives by rushing from their flaming tenements at the dead of night. Jamie to the last denied that he had any hand in the fire, but when the subject was referred to in

his hearing, he never forgot to remark—"Ye see nae good ever comes to onybody that's been ower hard on me."

His name now became a terror over a pretty wide district. If cattle were missing, the owners, under fear of greater calamities, spoke of their loss only in whispers. It was, however, well enough known that the animals found their way into the Highland droves, which at that time north country dealers brought in great numbers to market in the south. These dealers were by no means fastidious as to the character of those from whom they purchased, provided they got good bargains. Jamie was always on trading terms with them, which, if it did not add much to his fair fame, procured him the means of subsistence.

By the proceedings instituted against him at the instance of MacRobbie, he had been thrown out of house and hauld of his own. For lodgings, therefore, he usually took undisputed possession of some outhouse, seldom staying more than one night in the same place. He had a great aversion to passing the night in a dwelling house, or, indeed, in any house that might be secured by locks and bars. His favourite dormitory was the barn, a building very different from its successor the modern threshing mill.

For the convenience of winnowing the grain, the old barn was provided with two doors, one in front and the other directly opposite behind. The operation of winnowing was performed by throwing both doors wide open, and letting the corn drop from a sieve or bolter in the current of air passing between them. The chaff was thus swept out at the one door by the draught entering by the other, and the winnowed grain was left on the earthen floor in the intermediate space.

It was just in this space that Jamie usually took up his quarters for the night, so that if his retreat were attempted to be cut off at one entry he might have a chance of making

good his escape by the other. In this manner he lived for some years, not, however, without several attempts being made to apprehend him. These sharpened his wits, and put him under the necessity of adopting such precautionary measures for preserving his liberty as have been noticed.

He chiefly sorned on two brothers of his own surname, who held conjointly a small farm on the skirts of Morven, coming and going without let or hinder as he had a mind, and exacting food and other necessities of life by way of *Blackmail*.

But Jamie's career as a cateran was drawing towards its close. So long as he only meddled with the property of ordinary mortals he managed to escape with impunity. But success in crime is dangerous. Emboldened by his, he had the audacity to lay sacrilegious hands on some cattle belonging to the minister of Strathdon, and under cloud of night to unite them to a Highland drove lying on the Glaschoil. In those days he might defy the arm of the civil power, but he had miscalculated the puissance of the ecclesiastical, and mistaken the sort of men the ministers of Strathdon generally were. His information on this latter point was probably more defective than ours, thanks to the Baronet of Ulbster. Take the following sketch, from the Old Statistical Account of Scotland, of the men and ministers of Strathdon—

“The proprietors, who were very numerous, appear, at least some of them (for there are exceptions in the worst of times), to have been haughty, resentful, and cruel; nor were they at any loss for assistants in executing their most mischievous projects; as their example was followed and their commands implicitly obeyed by their tenants and followers. They had their feuds and family quarrels which they prosecuted in the most violent manner without regard

to time or place. Even the churchyard was on a Sunday sometimes the scene of action, where two hostile lairds with their respective adherents rushed upon one another with their durks and shabbles. The ministers in particular felt the effects of their savage barbarity. One minister—Mr. Baxter—had his head cut off at the manse door, with a Lochaber axe, by a laird in his neighbourhood. Another—Mr. Macsween—towards the beginning of the present (18th) century, after repeated insults, was attempted to be smothered with a wet canvas when at family prayers; but being a man of considerable bodily strength, he extricated himself from the toil, and some others met not always with the respect due to their character and functions.”

As Jamie’s bad fortune would have it, the incumbent of Invernochty of the time was highly popular with both lairds and vassals, and it was considered by them as an insult to the parish to allow their spiritual head thus lawlessly to be despoiled of his temporalities. Some of the most active men of the glen accordingly placed their services at his disposal. For two whole days Jamie ran before them, doubling and earthing like a fox before the hounds. At the middle of the second night he presented himself at the house of the brothers Coutts, in a state of great exhaustion and terror, and in a meeker manner than usual, begged a little refreshment.

After hurriedly devouring what was set before him, he thus accosted the elder brother—

“John, I’ve got meat, and drink, and lodgings here when my ain kin drove me starving f’ae their doors. Ye might aften hae betrayed me, but ye never did. Ye’ll no be troubled wi’ me mair. I see the minister’s beagles are determined to hae me, an’ I maun flee the country. Will ye promise me ae thing, an’ no deceive me at the last? Will you come to Aberdeen the day after the morn an’ see me shippit?”

Simple-hearted John promised, and his terror-stricken guest again plunged into the darkness from which but a few minutes before he had emerged.

At the time appointed the two met on the quay at Aberdeen, where the good ship had her sails already set. There the cateran gave John Coutts an inventory of his affairs, no very heavy document it may be presumed. Some little thing also by way of keepsake was pressed upon his acceptance.

“An’ noo, John,” said he, “I’m awa’; but where I’ll go, or what I’ll dee, I little ken; but the bonnie braes o’ Morven I’ll see nae mair.”

And though for many a day he had been there but a miserable vagabond, the thought of parting with his native glen for ever brought the tears into his eyes and his voice got husky. After a pause, he continued—

“But, John, wherever I go, if ever I come to onything, I’ll mak you my heir, mind that”; and after grasping by the hand the only human being he cared for, he leaped on board, and was soon out on the billows.

Honest John’s cogitations on his companion were somewhat serio-comic—

“Aifter an’ a’,” said he to himself, as he wended his way homewards, “aifter an’ a’, the peer rascal’s nae that ill-hearted. ‘If ever I come to onything, I’ll mak you my heir.’ If ever ye come to onything, Jamie, my man, I muckle fear it’ll be the gallows, and I dinna want sic an heirship as that. Hoo-somever, ye’re awa’, gweed be thankit; the countra could weel spare ye, honest man!”

CHAPTER IV

MORVEN JAMIE

(continued)

“The bad penny’s ill to tine.”—*Scotch Proverb.*



OME ten years passed away, and nobody knew, and nobody cared, what had become of Morven Jamie. That he had taken ship at Aberdeen was kept no secret at the time, and was felt to be a relief by all stockholders for miles around his former haunts. These ten years had nearly effaced the recollection that such an one had ever been. Times, too, had changed so greatly that, if the story of his cattle-lifting chanced to be told of a winter's evening, people marvelled how such lawless deeds would have been permitted in a civilized country.

About this time a British soldier, plodding his weary way over a dusty road on the plains of Hindostan, was overtaken by a grand carriage rolling along at a rapid rate. It had no sooner passed the soldier than it drew up, and the great man within, shining in gold and jewels, looked out, and beckoned him to approach. With his hand at his cap he obeyed the signal, when the following colloquy took place—

“Well, my man, where are you bound for?”

“I am for Madras, your Honour.”

"Ah, a long journey before you. Will you come up here? I'll take you on a league or two."

"Please, sir, it would not be proper for me to be seen in your Honour's carriage."

"Oh! I don't mind; I want to speak to you a little."

The soldier still seemed to doubt the propriety of taking a seat in the grand carriage, but really suspected some dark design on his liberty; for at that time it was generally believed in the British army in India, that the Mahratta chiefs had in their pay English emissaries to decoy or kidnap soldiers, and carry them off to the interior, where they were bribed or tortured to disclose any knowledge they might possess of the manufacture or use of munitions of war.

The great man, divining the grounds of the soldier's scruples (some think he had given too good cause for the general belief), continued in an assuring tone—

"You are perfectly safe here, Duguid, I know you well."

Hearing himself called by name, the soldier now made bold to accept the proffered seat. He then, as they sped onwards, gave a long and full account of the service he had seen in India, led on to it, as he afterwards acknowledged, by the seemingly careless, but really designing questioning of his new acquaintance.

"And now, tell me," continued he, "why you are going to Madras."

"I have been," replied Duguid, "twenty-one years in His Majesty's service. My health of late has not been very good; and I have applied for and obtained my discharge, and now I am bound for home."

"For Strathdon?" interposed his lordly companion.

"Yes, your Honour; but you have the advantage of me."

“Ah, I know all these parts very well. Will you carry a message from me to the minister there, if he is still alive? Tell him, whatever his intentions were, he did me the best turn I ever got in my life—tell him his whole stipend would not keep shoes on the horses of Morven Jamie. But there are some others thereabouts who may hear of me by and bye, not to their disadvantage. But here our roads part. I wish you a safe voyage, and many happy days on your native heath.”

So surprising to Duguid was the above announcement, that he almost forgot his soldierly breeding, and words to express his thanks for the favour he had received scarcely found utterance before the occupant of the carriage was out of hearing. For a moment or two he stood stock still with astonishment, staring at the fervid wheels as they glanced at intervals through the cloud of dust that lay in their track; but at length he got relieved of his emotions by exclaiming aloud—“Aye, aye, sirs; fa wad hae thocht it? There’s a whirligig o’ fortune for ye!” Then he called to mind the long long distance to Madras, and with a shrug of his shoulders addressed himself to the task of diminishing it.

In due course he arrived in Strathdon; but among the many strange tales he had to tell of the marvellous East, none so rivetted the attention of his listeners as his account of the wonderful fortune of Morven Jamie. Some, indeed, doubted the narrative, but most were inclined to believe it, thinking a Highland cattle-lifter no unlikely person to succeed in India at that time. A seven days’ wonder, the story lived its allotted span of existence, and then went into oblivion, where it lay undisturbed for seventeen years more. At the end of that period it again revived with greater interest than ever.

The present century was by this time several years old,

and the *fourth estate* of the realm had risen into a considerable degree of popular favour. The following anecdote quaintly illustrates one of the many changes in the habits of the labouring classes, introduced by the enlarged circulation of newspapers among them about this period. A clergyman in our district, happening to meet a parishioner, accosted him thus :

“John, I am sorry I have remarked of late that you have fallen off from the regular attendance on public worship, for which you used to be so exemplary. You were wont to be the earliest at church on Sunday morning, but now, I am grieved to say, you seldom show yourself there at all, and when you do come, you are often late and disturb the singing.”

“Weel, sir,” replied John, and a roguish twitching played about the corners of his mouth, “ye see there’s nae sae muckle occasion for ga’an to the kirk noo as there eest to be, for we hae the weekly news handed in till’s at our ain door.”

“Ah, John, John,” answered the good man with an admonitory shake of his head, “I gave you credit for what ye little deserved.”

With whatever effect on such men as John, one or two copies of the *Aberdeen Journal* found their way into every parish in the county. The landlord of the “Stane House,” Tarland, took care to be provided with one on all market days, that his customers might consult the home and foreign intelligence of the country, as well as the prices of grain and nolt.

It so happened that, on the occasion of a “Luac Friday,” as a farmer of the name of Anderson was regaling himself after the transactions of the day, and glancing over the columns of the above-mentioned newspaper, his eye chanced to alight on an advertisement to the following effect:—

"Notice is hereby given to the heirs of Mr. James Coutts, who left the county of Aberdeen, North Britain, about the year 1780; and in especial to John and William Coutts, now or then residing near the foot of Mount Mar, in said county of Aberdeen, N.B., them or theirs, that by applying to the firm of ———, Madras, they may hear of something to their advantage."

There was no hill in Aberdeenshire known by the name of "Mount Mar," and the district called Mar is so rich in mountains that it might have been difficult to fix on any particular one as meriting that appellation, had not the names of the individuals mentioned in this rather vaguely expressed advertisement led the reader to conjecture that "Mount Mar" was a corruption for "Morven," which had somehow found its way into print. John and William Coutts were now both deceased; William had died childless, but John had left a lawful daughter, who was the wife of a respectable farmer at some distance from the skirts of Morven. Anderson, who was well acquainted with all the families in the district, concluded at once that the Mr. James Coutts mentioned in the advertisement could be no other than Morven Jamie. He accordingly procured from mine host the copy of the *Journal*, and hastened with it to the house of his friend and neighbour. Then a grave consultation ensued, the result of which was that a bundle of old smoked papers was taken down from their perch on the upper shelf of the wa' press, and among them were found the letters Morven Jamie had given John Coutts on the quay at Aberdeen. These were supposed to contain satisfactory evidence that the farmer's deceased father-in-law was the John Coutts alluded to in the advertisement.

The big dram bottle, without whose presence no important business could be becomingly transacted, was

thereupon brought to table, and under its stimulating influence bright visions of wealth arose before the minds of the two farmers. No apprehension of slips between cups and lips overshadowed the prospect of coming greatness, or gave rise to doubts of ultimate fruition.

They accordingly took counsel whom they should honour with the important matter of claiming the fortune on their behalf; and their choice naturally fell upon a neighbouring laird, who was at that time a leading partner in a famous Indian firm. A plan was laid to bring the matter before him, and to engage and authorise him to act for his fortunate client. In a short time an opportunity offered for carrying out their views. The important documents were lodged in his hands, and, as the laird was just about to visit India, the fortune was thought to be as good as won.

The rumour of such an one's luck spread rapidly, and gathered mighty dimensions as it went. Fabulous wealth was within the grasp of a worthy neighbour. Speculation was rife as to what he would do with it, how he would comport himself; would he forget his old friends, would he give employment to country people, or would he take up with strangers and act the great man? On one point all were agreed—he would buy land and become a laird. Some even already sought his favour, petitioned for employment in various departments of his imagined service, or bespoke his influence with the government for more ambitious trusts. It was a wonder the poor man's head was not turned. For a brief space he had a sort of shadowy taste of greatness, perhaps fully as enjoyable while it lasted, as the reality is to many of its actual possessors. It was fortunate for his nervous system that before the spell was broken, and the vision had vanished into thin air, some years elapsed to tone down his ardent expectations, and allow space for doubt to creep in to break the shock of disappointment.

At length the laird returned from India, and soon received a visit from his client, who, after the usual salutations, introduced the subject of the legacy in his own homely way—

“I hope, sir, ye managed to mak’ something o’ my concern.”

“Well, Charles,” replied the laird, “I am sorry to say it came to nothing. You see there was some doubt about the identity of the person referred to in the advertisement with the man you mentioned ; and it would have taken a great deal of proof to establish the point. Indeed, it would have been necessary to send witnesses from this country to prove it, and that would have been very expensive ; and then very likely on the back of that there would have been a long and costly law suit, for there were more claimants than you ; and altogether, when I considered the matter, it appeared to me not advisable to proceed. And the truth is, Charles, that though you had made good your claim, you might never have got a shilling, for it is next to impossible to get money out of that country.”

With this very sensible answer, Charles appeared to be content, for he never made any other effort to establish his claim. Many of his neighbours, however, were not so easily satisfied of the cogency of the reasons urged by the laird ; and to this day doubts are expressed, whether, had every man got his own, there are not those within view of the Cairn of Morven now following the plough who would have been driving in their carriages.

Be that as it may, happiness and virtue dwell in no peculiar abode, and the following sentiment, expressed by a descendent of John Coutts, from whom the facts of this narrative were obtained, proves that he at least would not have been unworthy of the fortune expected by his ancestor,

and forms an appropriate moral with which to close the story of Morven Jamie. On being asked whether he did not regret the miscarriage of his father's application, he replied—

“Weel, sir, the money wad nae doubt hae been vera eesfu’; but what wisna to be couldna be. An’ fa kens how that wild cateran had made it? What’s bred i’ the bone’s nae easy taen out o’ the flesh; an’ I’ve never seen muckle good come o’ ill-gotten gear—we’re maybe better without it.”

CHAPTER V

THE BLACK WATCH

“Who so trim as a kilted laddie?
Tight his gear, and light his adorning,
With only a buckle his breast to fasten
When he leaps to his feet in the morning.”
—*Mac Mhaighstir Alastair, tr. by D. Mitchell.*



ALTHOUGH the brilliant campaigns of Montrose and Dundee must have taught the imperial government that within the Highland line there were the ready materials for almost indefinitely increasing the military strength of the nation, yet it is strange that for long after no attempt was made to enlist the Highlanders in the service of the country, but they remained, as they had been for ages, a source of weakness and disquietude to it. Government after government followed the vicious practice of arraying one clan against another, and so endeavouring to neutralize their warlike propensities, instead of taking advantage of them for the national well-being.

The plan, far from accomplishing the object in view, bred feuds and quarrels which kept neighbouring districts continually under arms to repel each other's incursions. Thus forced to the practice of arms by the necessities of the circumstances imposed upon them by the Government, and experiencing no security for the fruition of the labour of their hands in industrial employments, the Highlanders

consigned these employments to the females, the aged, and the infirm, and soon came to account them unworthy of the attention of any other. Moreover, a raid into the Lowlands, accomplished in a few days, generally brought more gain to the tribe than the produce of the previous twelve months' labour in their native glens. Thus, not only were habits of peaceful industry discouraged, but a predatory disposition was fostered, which gave no little trouble to the Government, and did much to retard the progress of agriculture in the neighbouring Lowlands. In the insurrections under Montrose, Dundee, Mar, and to no small extent in that also under the Chevalier, whatever may have been the impelling motives in the minds of the chiefs, there can be little doubt that, to most of their followers, the great charm of the risings lay in the prospect of an irresistible descent on the low country, and consequently an easily acquired and rich booty. Who was king in London was a matter of perfect indifference to the common Highlander; his duty was to his chief, and he would follow him as in duty bound; and when by doing so he brought himself personal profit, he embarked in the enterprise with unusual ardour. Even allegiance to the chief had to give way to the desire for booty. No sooner was a victory achieved than the Highlanders dispersed to deposit in their families whatever spoils they had obtained; and this practice the heads of the clans were seldom able to restrain. Montrose soon perceived that he must adapt his warfare to it, and hence the fruitlessness of his victories, and the ultimate failure of his undertaking. In fact, a victory was more certain to disperse a Highland army than a defeat. No doubt they would very soon rally again, with whetted appetites for renewed hostilities; but it would have been an easier matter to have kept the Highlanders together after Culloden than after Kilsyth or Killiecrankie.

The idea of forming a regiment out of the military elements thus running to waste in the Highlands seems to have first occurred to that wise and good man, President Forbes, who communicated his plan to the Government of George I. about the year 1725. It was not, however, till 1730 that any steps were taken to carry the suggestion into effect; and even then the only service contemplated for the new corps was the suppression of cattle-lifting and clan raids.

For this purpose, six independent companies of 100 men each were enrolled, and stationed at suitable posts throughout the Highlands. Every man, whether serving as a common soldier or as an officer, was both by birth and education a gentleman. For some years the service was highly popular, the different clans vying with each other who should contribute the tallest and handsomest men, always duine-uasals, or cadets of their principal families. In this manner was formed the celebrated BLACK WATCH, or *Am Freiceadan Dubh*,* and a finer body of men has seldom, if ever, appeared under arms.

But it was not till 1739 that the companies were formed into a regiment. Hitherto, they had acted quite independently of each other, and under the command of officers to whom they owed clan allegiance. A difficulty, however, arose when it was proposed to enrol them into one body; for, should the command be given to any Highland chief, it was evident that the others who had previously shared co-ordinate power and rank with him would become jealous of his preferment, and the worst consequences might ensue. On the other hand, should the Government select a noble-

* So called at first in contrast to the regular soldiers who wore scarlet. After 1739 the name was no longer applicable, as the Black Watch also became Saighdearan Dearg (red soldiers).—D.

man unconnected with the Highlands, it was equally certain that the enthusiasm hitherto displayed would be cooled, if indeed it would be possible to raise the required number and quality of men. To avoid as far as possible both risks, His Majesty's commission, for the purpose of embodying in one regiment the six old companies with four new ones, was granted to John, Earl of Crawford, and Lord of Lindsay. The choice was a happy one, for the Earl, though a Lowland peer, was not without Highland connection.

A lady of his house had shortly before formed a matrimonial alliance with the heir to the proud title of "the Lord of the Isles," under circumstances which had won the hearts of the Highlanders, before they became the subject of the once popular song—

"Will ye gang to the Highlands, Leezie Lindsay?

Will ye gang to the Highlands wi' me?

Will ye gang to the Highlands, Leezie Lindsay,

My pride, and my darling to be?

"O! ye are the fairest young maiden,

The pride o' the Lowland countrie.

Will ye gang to the Highlands, Leezie Lindsay,

My pride, and my darling to be?

"I'll gie ye my hand, Leezie Lindsay,

And a true heart that lo'es only thee,

Gin ye'll gang to the Highlands, Leezie Lindsay,

My pride, and my darling to be.

"She has put on a gown o' green satin,

And a happy young bride is she;

And she is aff wi' Lord Ronald Macdonald,

His pride, and his darling to be."

Through this connection the Earl had become known to most of the western chiefs, as he already was to many of the eastern; and, being a man of affable manners and a

sprightly disposition, he was much esteemed by both. He had spent his boyhood in the Highlands and knew the Gaelic language. He was besides possessed of other accomplishments that rendered him popular. An expert in all Highland games and pastimes, he was accounted one of the best dancers of his day of the *Gillie Callum* and *Mac an 'orsair*. Under the auspices of such a favourite, the new levy was speedily effected. As an instance of the eagerness with which the service was desired, may be mentioned the case of Peter Wright.

Peter, who was a native of the Braes of Cromar, had caught the military mania of the time, and on applying to Mr. Gordon of Blelack to obtain for him the much coveted post of a private in the Black Watch, received from him a letter of recommendation to Major Grant of Ballindalloch, who had been entrusted with the enlistments in the Eastern Highlands. With this letter Peter soon presented himself on the banks of the Spey, in high hopes of being permitted to don the scarlet jacket, tartan plaid of twelve yards in length, with dirk and pistols at the belt. But, on being put under the gauge, it was found that notwithstanding all his stretching he fell short by one-fourth of an inch of the required height, and was dismissed as unqualified. As he turned away from Ballindalloch House to retrace his steps to his native Cromar, he was observed by the major to be wiping off with his coat sleeve the tears that were coursing fast and heavy down his cheeks. Thereupon a servant was despatched to bring him back. On presenting himself again before the major, with the furrows of sorrow still fresh on his countenance, he was greeted with the welcome words, "Cheer up, Peter, my man ; if ye want a quarter of an inch in height, ye make up for it in spirit. We'll let ye on."

Peter afterwards served in Flanders, with what distinction

is not known ; but after his time had expired, he returned to Deeside, and as he was a man who had seen something of the world, was appointed to superintend a body of workmen employed on the commutation roads of the county. It is said that, infected with the Continental idea of favouring grenadiers, he paid the men, not in proportion to the work done, but to the supposed expense of each man's maintenance, estimated according to his physical dimensions. The small men complained, but it is not recorded that Peter therefore altered his rule.

When the four new companies of the Black Watch were enlisted, thus raising its effective strength to 1000 men, the whole were marched into England, under pretence of being reviewed by the king, but in reality for the purpose of being sent to Flanders to serve in the war against the French. On learning the deception that had been practised upon them, a considerable body attempted to force their way back to the Highlands ; but, when about a hundred miles of the journey had been accomplished, they were surrounded by a royal force, and compelled to submit. The rest of the regiment were immediately afterwards transferred to the seat of war under the number of the 43rd Regiment of the line ; but the party which had mutinied were tried by court-martial, found guilty, and condemned to death. Only three, however, suffered the extreme penalty of their rash act. These were Malcolm and Samuel MacPherson, and Farquhar Shaw, who had been chosen leaders, and were men of remarkable size and handsome figure. Shaw was connected with Deeside, the other two were Badenoch men. On the parade ground within the Tower of London they met their fate with composure and dignity, the whole company of their fellow prisoners joining in their prayers, and afterwards performing the last mournful rites with an earnestness and

solemnity that left a deep impression on the minds of the few beholders. Perhaps this severity was necessary to secure the discipline of the rest of the army, but, had the motives of the misguided men been better known, there was a favourable opportunity offered to the Government to conciliate the Highland clans, and render the Imperial service an object of ambition to them. This opportunity they neglected to improve, by an ill-judged severity to the other prisoners, who, instead of being permitted to join the rest of their fellow-countrymen in Flanders, where they would soon have wiped out to the advantage of their country any stigma attached to their previous insubordination, were sent to the West Indies and the North American plantations—a fate in their estimation scarcely less deplorable than that which had befallen their leaders on the parade ground of the Tower of London. To this mistaken policy may be in great part attributed the fact that, though several recruiting parties were sent to the Highlands, not fifty men in the subsequent five years could be enlisted to supplement the ranks of the 43rd at the seat of war. Some parties were sent, but they belonged entirely to the Government clans, from which, by another act of short-sighted policy, all the officers were selected. One of these appointments, as connected with Deeside events, may be here briefly noticed.

For some time previous to the Earl of Mar's insurrection the minister of Crathie was a Mr. Fergusson, a strong supporter of the Hanoverian succession, and possessed through his connections of no little influence with the Government. Attached to the Invercauld family, he had endeavoured, at first gently, to win over the laird to his own side of politics, but the pressure put upon him by the Earl of Mar to join his standard was too great to be resisted. Soon after this, Fergusson was translated from Crathie to Logierait

in Perthshire. Then followed the double collapse of Sheriffmuir and Preston, at which latter affair Invercauld was taken prisoner. On this becoming known to Fergusson, he exerted all the influence he could command to procure the pardon and freedom of his friend, and had the satisfaction to find that his efforts were not in vain. Some years afterwards Invercauld wrote a very handsome letter to the minister of Logierait requesting him to intimate in what way he might acknowledge his obligation. Fergusson suggested that he might, if he thought proper, testify his sense of the clemency of the Government by founding some educational endowment, or bursary, for the benefit of the parish of Crathie. The suggestion was acted on ; and the benefaction is still administered by the Invercauld family, and affords much valuable assistance both in maintenance and education to deserving lads of the name of Farquharson, Fergusson, or Macdonald.

It is characteristic of a noble minded man that he never forgets an obligation ; and John Farquharson of Invercauld was such a man. Years passed away and he grew in influence both in the Highlands and with Government, but no opportunity presented itself of returning the favour he had received from Mr. Fergusson. In 1724 the family at the manse of Logierait was increased by the birth of a son, whom the father intended to succeed him in the ministry, but for whom Providence had assigned other work. For the purpose of qualifying him for the church, young Adam was sent to study, first at the University of St. Andrews, and afterwards at that of Edinburgh. On the completion of his studies in 1742, he was, without solicitation, offered an appointment as chaplain to the Black Watch, and served with that regiment in Flanders. He was present at the battle of Fontenoy, and, though a clergyman, is said to have

charged the enemy, sword in hand, among the foremost of his fellow soldiers. There is no positive evidence that he owed this appointment to Invercauld, but there is reason to believe that he was the unknown friend who procured it for him ; and if so, it was an act worthy of being noticed, as not only graceful in itself, but as entitling its author to be considered the earliest patron of "Fergusson, the Historian." Fergusson's name is too well known in literature to require further reference. Of his many works that by which he is best known is his "History of the Roman Republic." This, and his "Institutes of Moral Philosophy," which, translated into German and French, was long used as a text book in several continental universities, justly entitled him to be ranked among the standard writers in the English language.

While on the subject of Fergusson and literary men connected with Deeside, it may be proper to mention another eminent man of this clan who derived his descent from ancestors within our district. The father of Fergusson the historian was not the only clergyman of that surname who had held the living of Crathie. From about the year 1630 to somewhere about 1670, the minister of this parish was also of the name of Fergusson, from whom, if we knew more of his history, we should probably be able to trace the descent of "Scotland's third Scottish poet"—the man to whose genius and worth there may yet be seen in the Canongate Churchyard, Edinburgh, a plain headstone, which, though a humble monument, will probably bring a tear to the cheek of every true hearted Scotsman, when he remembers how fast they flowed from the eyes of him who placed it there, as he stood for the first time "beside the green mound and the scattered gowans," uncovering his head in honour of the name of the sleeper below ; and when he

reads on one side the well known Epitaph—

“ No sculptur’d marble here, nor pompous lay,
 No storied urn, nor animated bust ;
 This simple stone directs pale Scotia’s way
 To pour her sorrows o’er her poet’s dust.”

and on the other, this inscription—

“ By special grant of the Managers
 To ROBERT BURNS—who Erected this Stone—
 This Burial place is ever to remain Sacred
 to the Memory of
 ROBERT FERGUSSON.”

We have not been able to trace the descent of the author of “ The Farmer’s Ingle ” from the Minister of Crathie with that degree of certainty which would warrant it to be affirmed as an historical fact ; but in the want of any opposing evidence we think it almost conclusively established. The known facts and traditions are as follows :—The Rev. Mr. Fergusson of Crathie had a daughter of the name of Agnes, who became the second wife of James Farquharson of Inverey, from whom were descended the Farquharsons of Auchindryne, now supposed to be extinct, and the Farquharsons of Tullochcoy, of whom several representatives still remain. Mr. Fergusson himself was descended from an ancient family, of whom, as proprietors, the late Dr. Joseph Robertson the eminent antiquary, has written that “ they possessed the estate of Auchtererne (Watererne) in Cromar, from the reign of David II. to that of James V., when it would seem they (as proprietors) became extinct.” Tradition has it that the last proprietor was the father of the Rev. Mr. Fergusson of Crathie, which, so far as chronology is concerned, might very well have been the case. The

minister is said to have had sons, but what became of them is not recorded. It is not unlikely that, according to the custom of the times, though their grandfather had parted with his property, he might still have retained a wadset on, or near it. It is here that the link is wanting to connect the minister with the poet, who was the son of William Fergusson, book-keeper in Edinburgh, to which city he had emigrated about the year 1746 from Aberdeen, whither he had, in the same or the previous year, removed from Cromar. Perhaps the Highland Insurrection may have exercised an unfavourable influence on his fortunes, and compelled him thus to leave his native district in quest of the means of living ; for it would seem, from the connection he had previous to this formed with a family of some consequence in Kildrummy, that his own was of no mean standing in Cromar. His wife, the poet's mother, was Elizabeth, daughter of John Forbes, tacksman of Templeton, Hillockhead, and Wellhead, a cadet of the family of Tolquhon. It may be said that all this does not prove any connection between the ancestors of the poet and the minister of Crathie. True, but it renders the connection probable, seeing they both belonged to the same district—a part of the north of Scotland in which, Dr. Joseph Robertson affirms, the name of Fergusson was then not numerous. But there is another fact which must be taken into account. It was the ambition of the poet's parents to educate him for the Church, endeavouring to kindle his own desire for that profession by frequently reminding him that his great-grandfather, by his father's side, had been a clergyman in the Church of Scotland. Most of his biographers have taken notice of this, though they have been unable to trace the poet's ancestry beyond his father. These two facts, taken in connection, put it almost beyond doubt that the great-grandfather referred to was the Rev. Mr.

Fergusson of Crathie,* whose descendants in the female line are yet to be found in the district of Cromar—one of them the heir to a property immediately adjoining Auchtererne (Easter Migvie, now Hopewell), the possession of which was probably in the family of his ancestors from the reign of David Bruce to that of James V.

* At a later period of his life, the author made further investigations into the question of Fergusson's ancestry, and was able to bring forward some new facts in support of the belief that the poet was directly descended from the minister of Crathie. The full statement of the proof will be found in Grosart's *Life of Fergusson* (Famous Scots series, 1898). The Rev. Alex. Fergusson, or Ferris (c. 1630-1670), had a son William, who, though the ancestral property of Auchtererne had been alienated by his grandfather, appears as a wadsetter in Cromar. The Christian name of this William's son is unknown, but he was the father of William Fergusson, the father of the poet. This last William Fergusson was born in Tarland in 1714, and there he was married about 1741. By the time of the poet's birth the parents had removed to Edinburgh, but his elder brothers and a sister were born in the North. Thus narrowly did Aberdeenshire miss the right of claiming him as one of her sons.—D.

CHAPTER VI

THE BLACK WATCH

(continued)

“ Oh ! our sodger lads look’d braw, look’d braw,
Wi’ their tartans, kilt, an’ a’, an’ a’,
Wi’ their bonnets, an’ feathers, an’ glitterin’ gear,
An’ pibrochs sounding loud an’ clear.
Will they a’ return to their ain dear glen ?
Will they a’ return, our Highland men ?
Second-sighted Sandy look’d fu’ wae,
An’ mithers grat when they marched away.”

—*Baroness Nairne.*



O return to the history of the Black Watch. The withdrawal of that regiment from the Highlands was the signal for the disaffected clans to set the law at defiance ; and it cannot be doubted but that the conduct of the Government greatly embittered their feelings, and thus favoured the designs of the Jacobites, who now began with much zeal to concoct plans for the restoration of the House of Stuart. Rumours of these at length reached the ears of His Majesty’s ministers, and began to open their eyes to the folly of keeping no watch over the machinations of these restless spirits, who beheld with displeasure their ancient authority succumbing to the daily increasing power of the law.

To repair the mistake, orders were issued in the beginning of 1745 to enrol a new Black Watch, or rather three companies of local militia as a reserve force to the old Black Watch, now serving in Flanders with great honour to themselves, and benefit to their country. The new levy was principally raised on Deeside and in the Highlands of Perthshire; and though the privates were not of the same social standing as those of the original companies, they were still select men, and not unworthy of the regiment whose name they bore. The Deeside corps was commanded by James Farquharson, younger of Invercauld, whose superior officer was his brother-in-law—the Laird of Mackintosh.

This force, even could it have been relied on for such a service, was far too weak to be any check on the insurrectionary spirit that now fired the clans; and scarcely were its numbers complete when the rebellion burst like a thunder-clap over the Highlands. The object of the Government had been to obtain the services of certain chiefs, rather than to raise a force capable of suppressing a rising, should that take place. The fact that the chief of the Mackintoshes and the heir of Invercauld were in His Majesty's pay, was assumed to be a guarantee that their clans would at least keep quiet, if they would not take part with the Hanoverian troops in the struggle now beginning.

But these expectations were doomed to disappointment. Several hundred Farquharsons came out under Francis of Monaltrie, young Invercauld's cousin, and others united themselves to the Mackintoshes, under his sister, who, in the absence of her husband, raised the clan, and thus earned for herself the facetious, but not inappropriate name of "Colonel Anne;" and young Invercauld himself, though an officer under King George, was the accepted son-in-law of Lord George Murray, the commander-in-chief of Prince Charles's

army. Similar complications obtained among the other clans. It was not therefore to be expected that the royal militia would be very forward in affording information of the designs of their kinsmen of the opposite faction ; and so the event proved. Prince Charles's standard had floated on the breeze in Glenfinnan several days before the authorities in Scotland were aware of his arrival.

In the hurried measures at length adopted to oppose the insurgents, the militia were joined to the regular troops, under Sir John Cope, but they served with a bad grace during his brief and inglorious campaign. One company refused to embark with him at Aberdeen, as being contrary to the terms of their engagement ; and another deserted almost to a man on the night preceding the battle of Prestonpans, while a few of the officers succeeded in getting themselves taken prisoners by their clansmen, sometimes under rather peculiar circumstances, as was the case with the Laird of Mackintosh.

This *brave* officer, on being apprehended by a party of Highland scouts, demanded to be brought before a person of rank to whom he might surrender himself a prisoner of war. He was accordingly conducted into the presence of his wife, then acting the part of chief of the clan in the Chevalier's army.* As he presented his sword she greeted him in true military style—"Your servant, Captain," to which he replied with equal brevity, "Your servant, Colonel," and so they ended the matter.

The above recorded incident occurred only a short time previous to the battle of Culloden. Lady Mackintosh had, at an early period of the insurrection, raised the clan in the interest of the Prince, from whom she received many marks

* See Note IV. for this story.

of attention and consideration. On one occasion she was the means of saving him from captivity, perhaps death, at the hands of Lord Loudoun's Highlanders. The event is thus narrated by the historian of the Rebellion—"On Sunday, the 16th February, Charles reached Moy Hall, the seat of the Laird of Mackintosh, about sixteen miles from Inverness. The laird was absent on duty as a partizan of the Government. The lady (Invercauld's daughter), who, as already mentioned, had raised the clan for the Prince, received him and his immediate attendants with great hospitality. Charles designed to rest here until his men should come up, before going nearer to Inverness, where the Earl of Loudoun had about sixteen hundred men in arms. Some one—suspected to be Grant of Dalrachny—sent information to Lord Loudoun that Charles was lodged at Moy Hall, with a slender retinue; and the Earl immediately formed the design of marching thither to take him prisoner. Notwithstanding the exertions he made to keep this scheme a secret, it became known to the Dowager Lady Mackintosh, who lived in Inverness, and who immediately despatched a messenger to put her daughter-in-law and the Prince on their guard. Meanwhile, in the evening, 1500 men had taken the road for Moy, under the conduct of the Earl. The messenger, a boy named Lauchlan Mackintosh, tried to pass through the army on the road, but finding this difficult, and dreading that he might be arrested, he lay down in a ditch by the way side till all had passed, and then bounded off by a circuitous road towards Moy. About five in the morning (17th February), he reached the house 'in a top sweat,' bearing information that the Earl of Loudoun's men were little more than a mile distant. The guard instantly awoke the Prince, who dressed quickly and came down to the courtyard. Lady Mackintosh appeared there likewise, 'in her smock petticoat,' for it was

no time for delicacy, and exerted herself to get the Prince and his guard sent to a place of safety, and all his valuable effects put out of the way. He went along Moy Loch to a place more than a mile off, where he met Lochiel and a party of his troops, with whom he resolved to stand his ground in case of an attack. Meanwhile Lord Loudoun's expedition had experienced a strange interruption. Lady Mackintosh had, the night before, sent out a patrolling party, consisting of *five* men armed with muskets, to keep guard on the road towards Inverness. The head of the party was a clever fellow named Fraser, the blacksmith of Moy. When he became aware of the approach of a great body of men along the road, he instantly comprehended the design in view. Planting his men at intervals along the wayside, he fired his piece at the head of the approaching body, and by the shot killed the Laird of MacLeod's piper, reputed the best of his time in the Highlands. The other men also fired, conveying the impression of a wide-spread body of opponents. The blacksmith was then heard crying upon the Camerons and Macdonalds to advance on the villains who designed to murder the Prince. The van of the advancing troops immediately fell into a panic, and, turning back with precipitation, they threw the rear into confusion, oversetting and trampling many as they went along. The whole army became inspired with the same terror, and fled amain to Inverness, where they arrived in a state of extreme distress from bruises, exhaustion, and mortification of mind." Such was the *rout of Moy*, in which it may be said that "Colonel Anne," with five retainers put to flight 1500 of his Majesty's best troops, commanded by an officer who was deservedly reputed one of the best generals of his age. It was, therefore, small shame to her husband to be compelled to surrender his sword to such a heroine.

After the disastrous defeat of the clans on Culloden Moor, the part assigned to the Highland Militia must have been very revolting to their feelings. They were united to the army of Cumberland, and employed to hunt down the fugitives, burn their houses, and plunder their lands. To the credit of their humanity, however, it deserves to be recorded that on Deeside at least they did more to alleviate than aggravate the sufferings of their unfortunate clansmen, displaying considerable ingenuity in leading the English soldiers away from their places of concealment, and otherwise affording them means of escape. To Invercauld in particular his kinsmen were under a deep debt of gratitude for the part he acted.

Old John was accounted one of the shrewdest and most prudent men in the whole Highlands, while his son, James, uniting to not a little of his father's wisdom a more amiable and benevolent disposition, deservedly secured for himself, throughout the long period, 45 years, during which he held the estate, an amount of influence both with the Government and among his clansmen and dependants that had never before been enjoyed by one of his name. From the suppression of the rebellion to his death in 1805, no other name fills so large a space in the annals of Deeside; and in the generation that followed, no memory was more revered and cherished than that of the "Old Laird," as he was called. His disposition did not lead him to adopt the profession of arms on which he had entered just as he had attained his majority, and the service he had seen was of a nature rather to repel than attract him. He accordingly soon quitted it for a more peaceful, and probably a more useful life.

To the company in which he had served a new and more honourable career was soon presented. The men had been

fired with the fame of the brave 43rd, or Old Black Watch, perhaps also influenced by the consideration the Government had at length shown for the feelings of that regiment in not requiring it to serve in Scotland during the civil war. At all events, when the militia companies were invited to form a small detachment to recruit the numbers of the 43rd, previous to their re-embarking for foreign war, so great was their eagerness for the service that they petitioned to be allowed to join the regulars *en masse*; and so ardent was every man to measure swords with the French that, to avoid giving offence to those left behind, recourse was had to the ballot to select the required number.

This ardour on the part of the Highlanders requires a word of explanation. It might be thought that the French, who had encouraged the rising in favour of the House of Stuart, would have had the sympathies, rather than the hostility, of a people devoted to the cause of that unfortunate dynasty. But while the Government clans hated them for having fomented the insurrection, the others entertained no better feeling towards them, believing that they had duped them into rising, and then betrayed and deserted them. They accordingly bore them a deeper grudge than they bore the English. A curious incident, illustrative of the hold this feeling had taken of the Highland mind, occurred many years after, at the capture of Quebec. The brave general, who fell on that occasion, had been engaged at Culloden, and taken some part in the subsequent severities practised on the insurgents, yet the Highlanders had no objection afterwards to serve under him. One of those who had been out in the '45, but was now serving under Wolfe in America, was discovered after the battle of Quebec, seated on a fragment of the ruins, sedately taking a pinch of snuff, with the bodies of seven Frenchmen, all slain by his own hand,

lying around him ; and it is related that when asked why he had dealt so severely by the enemy, he replied, "Nainsel' didna like the French, they werena true to Charlie."

In November, 1747, the volunteer band of the Black Watch set sail from Leith, to join the regiment at the seat of war ; and on many a well fought field in Flanders fairly earned the reputation of being the most daring soldiers in the British army. Their comrades who remained at home were still continued as a militia corps, though little or no active service was expected of them. The task of extinguishing the last embers of the late insurrection was entrusted to parties of the "English Red Coats," as they were called, whose activity was stimulated by the hope of plunder and prize-money.*

It is probable that the following pathetic song refers to some disaster that occurred in these troublous times, though the circumstances that gave rise to it are now unknown—

"YOUNG MONALTRIE.

"Hark ! Hark ! it is the horn
On mountain breezes borne.
Awake ! it is the morn :
Awake, Monaltrie !
"One word to his fair bride,
Who's sleeping by his side,
We can no longer bide ;
Away, Monaltrie !
"She sits in her lone tower,
At evening's pleasant hour ;
Dark shades around her lower—
Come back, Monaltrie !
"What shrieks of wild despair
Awake the midnight air ?
'Tis a frantic lady fair,
Who seeks Monaltrie.

* For Braemar after Culloden, *see* Note V.

“That evening by his side,
Reposed his lovely bride.
Fair Agnes there has died
For Young Monaltrie.”

For many years after the suppression of the rebellion the country was in a depressed and poverty-stricken condition. A new system of living had necessitated an entire change of avocations, and these were not speedily or willingly adopted. The old rent of personal service was inappropriate and valueless to the proprietors. Even payments in kind, which was the first step in the change, were ill suited to their requirements, now that every obligation was commuted into a money value. Money there was none among the tenants, and no means of raising it, agriculture and other industrial employments being as yet only in their infancy.

While the Highlands were in this condition the preliminaries of a peace between Great Britain and France were signed. The army in Flanders was recalled, and a very considerable reduction made in the military establishments of the country. Had the Highland soldiers been disbanded, the evils arising from a superabundant population would have been greatly increased, but, fortunately, this did not happen. The “Old Black Watch” had so signalized itself in the war, that, while other regiments were reduced, it was not only retained but a special mark of honour was designed for it. Its name and number were now changed to the ever memorable 42nd ROYAL HIGHLANDERS, than which a prouder title does not emblazon the page of the military history of this or any other kingdom.

The peace was of short duration. But now at length the importance of the Highlands as a nursery for the British army was fully recognised, and on the renewal of hostilities most of the new regiments were thence obtained. Their



DEE VALLEY ABOVE BRAEMAR.

first service was in America, where they bore the brunt of far more trying and sanguinary campaigns than their companions in arms had been subjected to in the Low Countries. This may be said to have been the first time that the Highland regiments formed a distinct brigade in the national army. Their general, Lord Loudoun, was also commander-in-chief of the expedition.

When we think of this brave band, every bosom in it throbbing with the love of its native glen, embarking hand to hand and shoulder to shoulder for a far distant shore—a shore which every man had been accustomed to associate with penal settlements and the worst of misfortunes—there to meet, besides their old foes the French, the barbarous warfare of the wild Indians, while we admire the military ardour that bore them on, we need not refuse our sympathy with the feelings that oppressed them, and the sentiment, relative to another occasion, so pathetically expressed by Lady Nairne, comes forcibly over the mind—

“Will they a’ return to their ain dear glen?
Will they a’ return our Highland men?”

The answer is a melancholy negative. The graves of the brave who then left our shores are to be found in Jamaica and Martinique, on the heights of Quebec and Abraham; and many, very many, slept their last sleep by the gloomy walls of Ticonderoga, but sadly strange it is that the memory of the present generation does not point to one who returned to sleep with his fathers in a green churchyard by the Dee.

CHAPTER VII

RECRUITING ON DEESIDE IN THE OLDEN TIME

Octogenarian—"How many folk are in the parish this time, maister?"

Enumerator of 1871—"Not so many as you have seen, Charles."

Oct.—"Fye, fye! No ane for sax that I hae seen; an' sic men tee! Ye're naething but ablachs to the pretty men that were in my young days. Fye, fye!"

Enum.—"Oh, yes, Charles, you're going over the score now. There are more than one for six. I grant you the country parts have much fewer people now than then. But look at Ballater—I dare say you remember when there was scarcely a house in it."

Oct.—"Ballater! I mind when there wisna a house ava in't; an' the first house was a wearie heather housie doon near the water side. Ballater! umph! an' what about it? I mind, man, when there was achteen reekan' houses i' the Daugh; an' noo there's only twa; an' a' ither toons sic like. Ballater, awyte! umph!"—*Veritable Conversation.*



F late years we have had much sentimental writing regarding the depopulation of the Highlands. The subject has been viewed both in relation to military and agricultural interests; and widely different conclusions have been arrived at respecting the matter in both relationships. Some have contended that, however cruel or oppressive these clearances, as they are called, may have been, it was for the advantage of the poor people that they should be removed, as in the

altered condition of the nation they could have remained only to be a burden on the country, or to be once every three or four years subjected to the pinch of famine ; and that, as a nursery for soldiers, the time had passed away when Britain required such a nursery, the surplus population of our large towns being more than sufficient to supply our military wants. On the other hand, it has been maintained that the cruelty was great at the time, and the injury to the nation irreparable, inasmuch as the loss of so many hands has been the cause of the great rise in the wages of agricultural labourers and farm servants, and consequently, in order to sustain this rise, a corresponding increase in the price of provisions has taken place, so that the labouring classes are now, not better, but worse off than they were in the olden time. As to the army, being composed as it is now of the scum of our city back slums, it has degenerated so far that no respectable person is to be found in its ranks ; and that it will be an evil day for this country when it has to rely for its safety on its army as at present constituted.

Without attempting to solve so knotty a point, the object of the writer of these pages is merely to exhibit the change that has taken place in respect to population, as well as in other respects, on Deeside since the middle of last century. The district embraced by these observations consists of the parishes of Aboyne, Glentanner,* Glenmuick, Tullich, Glogairn, Crathie, and Braemar, with the district of Cromar, comprising the parishes of Coull, Tarland, and Logie-Coldstone. The population of the whole, according to the census of 1871, amounts to 7782 ; and there is no very marked disparity between this number and what the same district contained in 1801, the first year in which we have

* For the name, *see* Note VI.

reliable statistics. The difference, therefore, within the century, though noticeable, has been gradually effected, and is still going on in the same direction, viz., an increase in the villages, and a decrease in rural districts.

The great Highland clearances began about twenty years prior to 1801, and continued for ten or twelve years to be practised in the northern counties with great rigour. The depopulation of Upper Deeside was effected with less severity, because the course adopted was a gradual dispossession extending over a much longer period of years, but it began quite as early.

At what date the population of Deeside reached its maximum is not quite clear, but it is certain that the pressure of surplus numbers was felt before the '45. As, however, up to that time the strength of a chief consisted in the number of broadswords he could bring into action, no effort was made to reduce the occupants of his lands, but rather the reverse—to increase their numbers irrespective of the capability of the district to maintain them. This state of things could not long continue. Want of employment gendered habits of idleness, at the back of which stood poverty and famine. To provide against this was the duty of the chief, and, more frequently than anything else, drove him to desperate courses, cattle-lifting, raids, and other *spulzieing* expeditions. Long before the '45 the law had become too strong for the chiefs to provide for their followers in this reckless manner with impunity, but they winked at it when practised by their dependants, and even made money out of it by pretending to restrain them in consideration of receiving *blackmail*.

But with every shift that could be devised, the prospects of the Highland chiefs at the opening of the 18th century were of the gloomiest. They were surrounded by an

indolent, starving crowd of tenants, for whom they could find neither work, money, nor victuals, and whose services in the only employment they were willing to engage in the Government had declared to be a capital offence, and was sufficiently powerful to carry its threat into execution on both chief and follower. Matters had come to a crisis at the accession of George I., and the rebellion of the Earl of Mar was felt to be a positive relief by many a chieftain who was at his wits' end what to do with his people. Though the insurrection failed in restoring the exiled king, it for a time relieved the pressure on the resources of the chiefs, many of whom, seeing little help from risings of the kind, turned their attention to other means of extricating themselves from their difficulties. An attempt was made in many parts to employ the people in improving the property of the lord of the soil, but though a wise, it was at first an unpopular step and was nowhere very successful.

A second time within the century the chiefs had an opportunity of utilising their followers in military service, and when Prince Charles invited them to give employment to their retainers in helping him to the throne of his forefathers, he made liberal promises to them that, if they succeeded, he would take care that they should be rid of all their difficulties for the future. Yet strange to say, there was much more backwardness manifested in rallying round the standard of the Prince himself, than thirty years before had been displayed in bringing forward the clans under the Earl of Mar. In the space of two months Mar assembled a force of 10,000, all Highlanders. During a campaign of eight months' duration Charles Edward was never at the head of an army of more than 7000, and of these a good many were Lowlanders. The reason was that during these thirty years several Highland proprietors had directed their attention to,

and endeavoured to engage their followers in peaceful avocations, and were finding that, though a slow, it was a sure way of turning the tide of their fortunes, and were therefore unwilling to sacrifice the hope that had dawned on them, for so hazardous a speculation as the Prince held out to them. But in the districts—and Deeside was one of them—that went pretty heartily into the rebellion, we may infer from the number of men contributed, that our glens were then teeming with a warlike population.

A rule which was the growth of ages, like the patriarchal system of government in the Highlands, could not be destroyed by one disaster, or by the enactment of an imperial law. The latter puts an end to its actual exercise, and admits of its being disputed; but, sentimentally, its decay must be like its growth, the work of time. Hastened it may be by many circumstances, but the passing of a bill will not destroy it in the hearts of the people. Neither the defeat at Culloden, the severity of martial law that followed, nor the Act abrogating the jurisdiction of the chiefs, was sufficient to drive the people from looking to their former rulers for protection and support. Some few, both high and low, mostly the former, had to escape for their lives; others, from the wreck of their fortunes, were compelled by destitution to emigrate to the colonies, but there was no desire on the part of the inhabitants generally to quit their native glens, and none on the part of the proprietors to drive them away. But as little progress was made in agriculture, and the population was largely increasing, there began about 1755 a period of distress arising from excess of inhabitants.*

The nation was now preparing for war both on the continent and in America, and had little time or inclination

* See Note VII.

to think of the poor Highlanders ; in fact, had no sympathy with their sufferings, and they might have been left to be reduced to a sustainable number by famine, but for the wise consideration of a single man. That man was Lord Chatham. So early as 1756 he proposed to the government of George II. to employ the Highlanders in the King's service. President Forbes had done the same thirty years before, and, had his advice been followed, in all probability there would have been no rising in 1745. Lord Chatham was more successful ; royal letters were issued to Sir Archibald Montgomery, son of the Earl of Eglinton, to try whether the Highlands might not be relieved and his Majesty's Service promoted by giving the overcrowded glens an opportunity of sending to it their surplus men. Deeside profited largely by this offer. Within a month more than 200 had joined the regiment in which Charles Farquharson, younger of Balmoral, held the post of first Lieutenant. The following account of the enrolment of this regiment has come down to us : " Battalions on battalions were raised in every part of the Highlands among those who a few years before were devoted to, and had too long followed the fate of the race of Stuart. Their chiefs or connections obtained commissions ; and the lower class, always ready to follow, with eagerness endeavoured who should be first listed."

The success of this attempt at recruiting in the Highlands was so signal, that within the next three years five regiments were similarly enrolled, draining from the over-peopled glens a larger number of men than were present under the Prince at Culloden. Of one of these regiments, Keith's Highlanders, we propose to take more particular notice afterwards. It was raised almost entirely from the districts of Braemar and Atholl. In addition to the two above-mentioned regiments, the northern contingents of

which were enlisted mostly in the upper parishes, another regiment, the Gordon Highlanders, was raised in the same year (1759), and was largely recruited from the Gordon estates in the lower parishes. Deeside must have been in a strange condition, when within two years it could not only spare 400 of its adult male population, but when the opportunity to enlist was eagerly coveted.

Well might Lord Chatham, many years after, in his celebrated speech on our differences with America, say: "I sought for merit wherever it was to be found; it is my boast that I was the first minister who looked for it, and found it in the mountains of the north. I called it forth, and drew into your service a hardy and intrepid race of men, who, when left by your jealousy, became a prey to the artifices of your enemies, and had gone nigh to have overturned the state in the war before the last. These men in the last war were brought to combat on your side; they served with fidelity, and they fought with valour, and conquered for you in every part of the world."

The repeated drains to which we have alluded, had at last the effect of reducing the population almost to a number that could be fairly supported. In 1762 peace was concluded, and it was evident that if the Highland regiments were disbanded and the soldiers returned to their native glens, a worse state of matters than anyone then living had yet seen would be brought on. There was great reason to apprehend such a result; the Government was reducing the military establishments of the country to a peace footing, and many regiments were already discharged. Such, however, had been the services of the Highlanders in the late war, and such were the representations made from many quarters of the evils likely to arise from sending back the men to their poverty-stricken glens, now only beginning to show symptoms of

peaceful industry, that it was resolved to disband as few of these regiments as possible, and to offer the discharged soldiers free grants of land in Canada. Under this wise policy the dreaded evil was averted.

Meantime, however, the home population was again becoming excessive. The nine years of peace that followed to the nation were not years of prosperity and quiet to Deeside. The proprietors had embraced the opportunity afforded by the drafting of so many of their tenants to the late war to enlarge the holdings of those who remained, and had reaped the advantages of the plan by an increase of rent. They were not, therefore, disposed to revert to the old system of subdividing the holdings among the children of their tenants; but, notwithstanding the increase in the population, and the lack of military or other employment for the daily increasing surplus, they resolved to embrace and make occasions for still farther adding field to field and house to house. The consequence was that the district began again to swarm with idle and discontented men, who rather obstructed than aided the progress of industry. Seeing no hope of getting rid of these by drafting them off to the army, several proprietors, and one at least on Deeside, attempted to eject them from their estates, by serving upon them warrants of removal; and when these were disregarded their domiciles were pulled down about their ears. Many were thus forced, much against their inclinations, to emigrate to foreign lands.

But a relief was at hand for those landlords who did not choose to follow this cruel line of treatment. The revolutionary war in America broke out, and at the same time the Mahratta war in India. Great exertions were made by the Government to increase the numerical force of the regiments already on the military list, and as many of these were Highland regiments, recruiting companies were sent into the

parts where the regiments had originally been raised to complete their numbers. But besides these, in the course of one year alone (1778) no fewer than five new Highland regiments were added to the line. The number of recruits obtained from Deeside cannot be accurately ascertained, but it is noticeable that the honour of contributing to the first Highland regiment enrolled after the '45 (Montgomery's Highlanders) fell to Braemar and Atholl; and singularly enough the command of the new levy was given to Colonel James Murray, son of Lord George Murray, who had the command of the old rebel army at Culloden. This is enough to show how great had been the change which these thirty-two years had effected in the sentiments of both the Government and the Highlanders.

Whilst the Braemar contingent of the Atholl Highlanders, or 77th Regiment of the line, was being raised in that district, a new regiment was receiving large additions to its ranks from the parishes of Glenmuick and Aboyne. This was the 81st or Aberdeenshire Highlanders. The full number of men for both regiments was enlisted in less than two months. The terms on which they took service were that they should be bound for three years, or until the war was ended.

CHAPTER VIII

RECRUITING ON DEESIDE IN THE OLDEN TIME

(continued)

“ The dinlin’ drums alarm our ears,
The serjeant screechs fu’ loud,
‘ A’ gentlemen and volunteers
That wish your country gude,
Come here to me, and I sall gie
Twa guineas and a crown,
A bowl o’ punch, that like the sea
Will soum a lang dragoon
Wi’ ease this day.’ ”—*Fergusson.*



IT is necessary to follow the history of these regiments for a little, as the most erroneous notions were and still are entertained on Deeside regarding the conduct of the officers towards the men.

It is firmly believed that, towards the close of their period of service, an attempt was made to sell them to the East India Company; that the officers were to receive a large sum should they be able to implement their part of the agreement, and ship the men from England. The value of the transaction to one officer was said to be a firlof of gold—we forget if it was specified whether it was to be heaped or not. Just as the men arrived at Portsmouth, the matter got

wind, and they refused to embark in the ships prepared to transport them. A mutiny took place—the old story of the Black Watch would have to be told again. The impression made on the minds of the soldiers was deep—so deep, that they had sworn if they could get their hands on their betrayers, they would hang them incontinently, for they believed that, once in India, they were to be treated like slaves, were to be at the mercy of those who bought them, and to be subjected to all manner of bad treatment, and to be kept till the last man of them had perished ; or perhaps sold to Indian chiefs, to be put to death by every species of torture.

When the news of this transaction reached Deeside on the return of some of the men, the deepest horror was felt at the baseness of the officers. People talked about nothing else, and the most exaggerated pictures were drawn of the treachery and villainy that had been practised towards the too confiding soldiers. It was natural to expect such an account would receive full credence among the peasantry. It was a vindication of their order for the mutiny their fellow-countrymen had taken part in, it was in accord with the belief they entertained regarding the unfaithfulness of those in power to the engagements to soldiers ; and when, as at that time, there was no means of enlightening them as to the actual circumstances of the case, it is no wonder that the dark suspicions they entertained grew and deepened as each returned soldier added his story of treachery to what had already been told. There is no greater mistake that politicians or others can commit than to attempt to draw upon the simplicity of an ignorant primitive people ; for, let but the smallest suspicion of unfair dealing enter their minds, and it not only assumes wide proportions, but holds its ground against all reason to the contrary. It was so in the

case of the soldiers of the 77th and 81st regiments, the simple facts of whose history are these :—

In the year 1778, the young Duke of Atholl received from the Government authority to raise a regiment of a thousand men for the service of the state, with power to appoint officers. This was the usual practice of the time, and such letters of authority were much sought after by the heads of great houses, as they were thereby enabled to find commissions for a large number of their poorer relatives. Most of the Highland regiments were raised in this manner. The command of the 77th, or Atholl Highlanders, was accordingly given to James Murray, son of Lord George Murray. Invercauld, being brother-in-law to the Colonel of the corps, naturally interested himself in the enlistments ; and thus it happened that Deeside was called upon for a contingent of the men. But the recruiting operations extended far beyond the Invercauld estates. In order to secure the requisite number in the shortest possible time, commissions were offered to members of other families than those connected with the house of Atholl.

Charles Gordon, of Shilagreen, brother of the laird of Abergeldie, had been appointed to a lieutenancy in the Gordon Highlanders, or 89th Regiment, raised in 1759. Though then only a very young man, he was now a soldier of twenty years' experience, and had seen some service in India, where he attracted the notice of Major Hector Munro, under whom he probably served at the battle of Buxar, in 1764. Returning home with his regiment in the following year, he resided generally with his brother at Abergeldie Castle ; and while held in the highest repute as a soldier and a gentleman by the neighbouring gentry, his generous disposition and affable manners in a short time rendered him the idol of the peasantry. He attended their balls and

merry-makings, and was invited to their weddings and feasts, in all of which he mingled with the common people with an ease and grace that won their hearts. "He was the life of every company, an' for a dancer there was never the like o' him on Deeside, except maybe roch Sawnie Davidson," is the tradition now received regarding him.

Captain Gordon, being unattached at the time, was offered the high position of Lieutenant-Colonel in the 77th, and his acceptance at once secured unbounded popularity for the corps, so that in the space of six weeks the number of men was complete.

In the month of June they assembled in Perth, where they were formally embodied, and thence marched to Port-Patrick and embarked for Ireland. Their service here was by no means of a pleasant character, the country being then as now in a state of chronic rebellion, but their conduct was most exemplary.

Peace being concluded, they probably expected to return home, in terms of their enlistment; but in 1783 they were transported to England with the view of being sent to India. There can be no doubt that the Government intended to disregard the conditions on which the men had taken service, but there is not the least ground for the belief that the officers were at all to blame for this breach of faith; nor were they as yet distrusted, for while the regiment was on its march through England, it was announced to the soldiers that they were intended for service in the East Indies, and, so far from showing dissatisfaction, they pulled off their bonnets and gave three ringing cheers for a "brush with Hyder Ali." There can be little question, however, that they were at this time under the impression that they were either to be re-enlisted on more favourable terms, or were to receive a bounty. But on their arrival at Portsmouth,

finding that the order for embarkation was not accompanied with the offer of any bounty, or the promise of any reward whatever, suspicion of unfair dealing at once entered their minds. They were also tampered with, it was said, by emissaries from London, who intimated "that they had been sold to the East India Company, at a certain sum per man, and that the officers were to divide the money amongst themselves." These representations received a colour of plausibility from the exertions made by the officers to induce the men to embark, though they sprang from far less unworthy motives than those ascribed to them. It was their duty to endeavour to secure compliance with the order of the Government; but besides this, it was very much against their own interests that the regiment should be disbanded, as thereby they would be thrown out of employment. To Colonel Gordon especially the Indian campaign offered great temptations. He had already seen service there, and as a subaltern had secured the favourable notice of Sir Hector Munro, now almost at the head of the military affairs of the Company. To appear again upon the scene, this time as second in command of a brave Highland regiment, whose action in the field he had no doubt would be the salvation of the Company, opened a prospect of distinction to which no officer could be indifferent. He was therefore particularly anxious that the orders of the Government should be complied with, and on him and his superior officer accordingly fell the weight of the men's suspicions of treachery.

For several days the utmost confusion and excitement prevailed; the officers were hooted, and their authority despised, and mutinous ballads were composed and circulated through the ranks. A fragment of one of these, in the shape of a parody on the Jacobite song of "Johnnie

Cope," will serve to show the excited state of feeling that prevailed—

"To the East Indies we were sold
By Murray, for a bag o' gold.
But, hold ! for we will a tale unfold,
And it will rust his glory.

Chorus—Oh, Charlie !* are ye wakan' yet,
Or are your drums a beatan' yet,
The Highland drums to arms do beat,
Will ye go on board this morning?

* * * * *

If it were to fight with France or Spain,
With pleasure we would cross the main ;
But for like bullocks to be slain,
Our Highland blood abhors it.

Chorus—Oh, Charlie ! &c.

To the East Indies we winna go,
To serve Eyre Coote or Hec. Munro ;
Our time is oot, and hame we'll go
In spite o' a' their noses.

Chorus—Oh, Charlie ! &c.

Another writer gives the following account in a letter to a friend—"You may be sure I have had my perplexities since the mutiny commenced in the 77th Regiment, but I must do the men the justice to confess that, except three or four drunken fellows, whose impudence to their officers could only be equalled by their brutality, the whole regiment have conducted themselves with a regularity that is surprising ; for what might have been expected from upwards of one thousand men let loose from all restraint? Matters would never have been carried to the point they have, but for the interference of some busy people who love to be fishing in

* Charles Gordon, Lieut-Colonel.

troubled waters. On their being informed that two or three regiments were coming to force them to embark, they flew to their arms, and followed their comrade leaders through the town with a fixed determination to give them battle, but on finding the report to be false, they returned in the same order to their quarters. The regiment is not to go to the East Indies, contrary to their instructions, which has satisfied them, but will be attended with disagreeable consequences to the service, and since the debates in the House of Commons on the subject, I should not wonder if every man intended for foreign service refused going, for the reasons then given, which you may depend on it they are now well acquainted with."

In the debates in Parliament on this unfortunate affair, the Secretary for Ireland bore the most honourable testimony to the good conduct of the regiment when in Ireland. He said, "I had the 77th Regiment immediately under my observation during sixteen months of their garrison duty in Dublin, and though it was not the most agreeable duty in the service, I must do the men the justice to say that their conduct was most exemplary. Their officers were not only men of gentlemanly character, but peculiarly attentive to regimental discipline. Having once, upon the sudden alarm of invasion, been under the necessity of sending an order for the immediate march of the regiment to Cork, they showed their alacrity by marching at an hour's notice, and completed their march with a despatch beyond any instance in modern times, and this too without leaving a single soldier behind."

As the blame lay entirely with the Government, none of the men were brought to trial. The order for the embarkation was countermanded, and the regiment was immediately marched to Berwick, where it was disbanded in April, 1783. The Aberdeenshire Highlanders, whose terms of engagement

were the same as those of the Atholl Highlanders, were also intended to be sent to India, but on hearing of the refusal of the latter regiment, they also declined to march from their quarters, and were accordingly sent to Scotland and disbanded at the same time.

The news of this unfair and unworthy attempt on the part of the Government spread like wildfire in the Highlands, and had the most pernicious effect on all subsequent endeavours to raise soldiers there. If a Highlander enlisted, his relatives gave him up for lost ; he had put himself into the hands of an unscrupulous master who might sell him to the highest bidder—Indian chief or Turkish Pacha—as if he were a horse or a bullock. Add to this feeling the bitter indignation now rankling in the minds of the common people on account of the clearances which about this time had reached their culminating point of severity in the northern shires, and were practised more or less over most of the Highlands, and it is no wonder that the days of volunteering into the army were at an end. The army, indeed, was looked upon as the instrument by which landlords were enabled to carry out their cruel evictions. So far from there being now any emulation among the people to find posts, as they termed it, for their sons in the army, the prevailing sentiment was that of Rory Gunn—"Son of mine in a red coat, to be sold as a slave, or forced to pull his countrymen out of house and hauld at the bidding of the laird ! I'd rather see him in his grave-clothes—there would be no degradation there."

It is true that it was only in Ross and Sutherland, where the Macraes had risen in a body to oppose by force the wholesale clearances of their native glens, and had been dispersed by the military, that this sentiment had attained so high a degree of intensity. But if the evictions were fewer

on Deeside than in the north, its connection with the soldiers of the 77th was more intimate, and the unpopularity of the army was scarcely less strong. And even on Deeside more than a sufficient number had been compelled to give up their fields to the deer of the forest, to kindle in the breasts of those that remained a spirit of hatred against the offending proprietor, and of opposition to the authority that gave him power to oppress. The spectacle of a band of evicted families from the upper glens of Braemar, passing through the long Strath, with sorrow and sadness depicted in every face, and headed by a piper playing "Lochaber no more," was not likely soon to be forgotten, or to awaken the most friendly feelings towards those who, by the strong arm of the law, had been the cause of the melancholy procession.

When, therefore, in 1793 Britain was entering upon a war that boded to be more protracted than any she had yet engaged in, and to demand of her more soldiers than she had ever yet had on her military establishment, it is little wonder that the Highlanders kept back. At first letters were issued as on former occasions, empowering chiefs to raise soldiers for the service of the state, and so blinded were the statesmen of that time to the change that had taken place in the sentiments of the people that they deemed it needless to offer the small bounty previously given to those who enlisted. Not a single soldier left Deeside ; nor, with the exception of the Cameron and Strathspey Highlanders, was there a single regiment raised north of the Grampians. Finding no success from the economical method adopted, the Government restored the bounties, but now even this failed in bringing in the necessary number of men.

At this time (1794) the Marquis of Huntly undertook to raise a regiment, and letters of service were granted him for that purpose. The Marquis was the most powerful and

popular nobleman in the north, and though the success of his undertaking could not be doubted, the regiment which he raised could scarcely be called a Highland regiment, more than half the men belonging to the lowlands of Aberdeen and Banff. The letters of service under which he acted authorised him to enlist, by compulsion if necessary, idle and unemployed men, who had no industrial occupation, or it was popularly believed that he had such authority and could delegate it to the recruiting officers under him, who, if not so invested by the State, certainly availed themselves of the general belief that they were, and in this way secured several recruits on Deeside, while they put many others to no small shifts to invent occupations for the time being, or otherwise to find grounds of exemption. Two cases are still on the traditionary records of the district.

John Shewan, a very powerful but a very indolent man, who would neither work nor want, inhabited a small tenement on the very brink of the burn of Greystone. Lieutenant Alexander Stewart was stationed with a recruiting party at Inverey in Braemar, with the view of raising men in the upper district, and Peter Gordon of Abergeldie, a brother lieutenant, was instructed to co-operate with him, and endeavour to obtain some recruits in his own neighbourhood. Now John Shewan, living quite opposite to Abergeldie, was well known to Gordon as a very handsome man, but one that the district could very well spare, and he became anxious to secure him. But John could never be found at home when a party from the Castle waited upon him to do him this honour. For months he did nothing all day long but keep watch on a commanding knoll, and at the first appearance of Gordon tartan he was off to hiding.

He had only one confederate, his wife, but she was a faithful ally ; and with her assistance he managed to foil all

attempts to ensnare him, or catch him napping. At first Shewan, having nothing else to amuse him, rather enjoyed the sport of leading the soldiers a wild-geese chase. But it became wearisome, and he was heard to express his intention of giving one or two of his tormentors a *striking* proof of his presence if they did not speedily put a stop to their visits. This had the effect of increasing the number of the hunting party, and it was said that they never afterwards attempted to beat up John's quarters unless they were fifteen strong.

On one occasion, when Lieutenant Stewart was at Abergeldie, it was proposed that he should undertake the capture of the fugitive, and scouts were accordingly sent out. These bringing in information that for once Shewan was off his guard, Stewart mustered a party of horse and foot, hastily crossed the Dee at Aanfuile, and advancing rapidly up the hillside, was soon at the door of John's dwelling. Here he was met by the gude-wife, who, with a smiling countenance, invited him to come in.

"Is John at home?" inquired the lieutenant, assuming the same lively, indifferent air that the wife manifested.

"Awye he's nae that," replied she, "an' I hardly expect him hame the nicht; for he's awa' wi' our neibbor's stirk to the glen. Fa'll I say was speeran for him?"

"I would just like to see him myself," replied he, "and we will take a turn about the braeside here; perhaps he may appear before long."

He then directed his party to beat up the neighbouring coverts, certain from the information he had received from his scouts that he must be hiding at no great distance.

They had no sooner left the door than the wife rushed to her watch-tower on the top of the knoll, whence she observed their movements with much keenness, though with seeming indifference. All at once she shouted at the pitch of her

stentorian voice—"Rin, Jock, rin ; they're makan' straight for ye." Away went Shewan from his concealment at the back of an old stone dyke, and away went Stewart galloping after him, followed by a dozen others at various distances behind. By directing his course over the most rugged and rocky tracts, the pursued for some time kept well ahead ; but it was evident that this could not last long, and that sooner or later his strength must give way to the horse power at the service of the military. He was rapidly coming to this conclusion himself ; and seeing no hope of finally making good his escape, was about to surrender, when the indignant notes of his wife's trumpet tongue from the watch-tower made the hills ring with—"Tak' to the wud, ye gype." Immediately Shewan doubled round a rock, to deceive his pursuers, and then rushed full speed towards a birch wood at some distance off. A foot soldier, who happened to be in his path, gave him a broad stare as he passed like a deer, blowing and snorting, but took care also to give him a wide berth. Having gained the thicket, Shewan for that time eluded his pursuers.

Talk of fox-hunting ! It is but tame sport compared to what recruiting for the Gordon Highlanders on Deeside was in the year of grace 1794 ; but what a change has come over the spirit of the people when the service, which ten years before had been an object of ambition to the youth of the district, now required such measures as those to fill its ranks !

The other case to which allusion has been made was somewhat different in character. There lived in a small hut near Lebhall "an idle lounge" of the name of John Coutts, on whom the recruiting party stationed at Abergeldie Castle had set their eyes as one coming within the sphere of their jurisdiction. Coutts had no military proclivities, but he disdained to evade the claim upon him by adopting the

fugitive tactics of his neighbour Shewan. He preferred rather to have a Scriptural warrant for his proceedings, and took his cue from the conduct of David during his first visit to Gath—he feigned himself mad ; and following the example of another king, whenever the soldiers paid him a visit, pretended to be vigorously eating grass and looked savage. Nothing could be made of him. His wife declared that he was “oot o’ his senses ;” and his conduct before the soldiers bore her out in her statement. Gordon, however, knowing that John was three parts rogue for one part fool, continued to make inquiries by the hands of the red-coats regarding his state of mind ; but, at their appearance, he would be found either on all fours on the field, or chewing a bush of heather or broom, a bundle of which he always carried under his arm to be ready when occasion might require. Instead of avoiding the soldiers, he generally advanced to meet them, bo-o-ing like an ox, and often rather seriously terrifying them.

During one of Lieutenant Stewart’s visits to Gordon, the latter mentioned to him how completely Coutts had fooled the recruiting sergeant. Stewart, always keen for an encounter with refractory characters, desired to be conducted to the house of this man. “The Inverey man,” as Stewart was called, had by his vigorous measures inspired no little dread of his name, and when his approach was signified, Coutts felt it was necessary for him to be more than usually circumspect. On nearing the house, the Lieutenant heard a noise proceeding from within, as if some one were breaking the furniture to pieces. Giving his horse in charge to the soldier that accompanied him, he fearlessly stepped in at the low narrow doorway, and found John’s wife, apparently in great trepidation, holding fast the lids of the box-bed, while the prisoner within kept knocking with his hands and feet all round, as if he were making frantic efforts to escape.

"Mercy ! sir," said the wife, "I'm glad ye've come, sir. He's nae mows, sir. If he brak lowse, he'll devoor the house, sir ; an' I'm hardly able tae haud tee the lids, sir ; uve, uve !"

Instead of assisting the woman to "haud tee the bed lids," as she seemed to wish him, Stewart looked on calmly for a minute or two to make sure of how matters stood ; but so perfect was the acting on the part of both man and wife, that he was deceived into the belief that Coutts really wanted to escape ; and, losing temper at what he conceived to be the violence of the man, exclaimed, "Let out the scoundrel, perhaps I'll cure his madness."

"Uve, uve ! Oich, marooai !" ejaculated the wife, and held the lids more firmly than before.

"Let him out, woman ; I've a cure for him, or perhaps I can give it him in his bed." Saying which, Stewart went out for his horse-whip. While he was doing so, the prisoner, who had got a hint of what the next act was likely to be, immediately burst from the bed and house, and bo-o-ing like an infuriated bull, set off wildly over the adjacent haugh, with no covering but a rag of an old harn shirt. The Lieutenant instantly mounted his war-horse, and the ground being favourable for riding, was soon alongside of John, to whose bare limbs and back he applied the whip cord without stint. But although in this manner he whipped him back to his house again, he did not succeed in making the sufferer betray himself. As soon as he entered the house, his wife pretended to push him into bed by sheer force, and then held to the lids as before ; and, as before, John kept up the same pretended efforts to escape. Upon discovering this, Stewart rode off, saying as he left—

"I give him up, wife, he's undoubtedly mad."

Though Coutts was not likely after this adventure to be

much molested by the recruiting gang, he was determined to have his revenge for the horsewhipping he had received. Accordingly, some time after, observing two soldiers passing along the road, he armed himself with a pitchfork, stuck some hay into his mouth, and rushed at them like a bull at a red cloth. The fellows took to their heels, and John pursued. After a heat of more than two miles, he relinquished the chase, chuckling at the fright he had given the red-coats.

Soon after this the party was withdrawn from the district, and John Coutts returned to his right mind. "I'm nae feel noo," was his exclamation, when he was told that they were gone for good.

Thus ended recruiting on Deeside in the Olden Time.

CHAPTER IX

JOHN STEWART, *alias* IAN ALLANACH

“The battles, sieges, fortunes
That I have passed,
I ran it through even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it.”

—*Shakspeare.*



THE formation of the 87th Regiment or Keith's Highlanders has already been referred^{to} to. About the end of the year 1759, they joined the allied army in Germany, under Prince Frederick of Brunswick; and for three years bore a distinguished part in the military operations undertaken by that commander against the French. The appearance of this body of troops, so unlike in dress and manners any soldiers the Germans had hitherto seen, gave rise to various surmises regarding their previous mode of living, and some curiosity was exhibited to learn what it had been. A learned writer in the *Vienna Gazette* of 1762 undertook to solve the problem; and here is his account—"The Scotch Highlanders are a people totally different in their dress, manners, and temper from the inhabitants of Britain. They are caught in the mountains when young, and still run with a surprising degree of swiftness. As they are strangers to fear,



WESTER MICRAS FROM TORGALTER.

they make very good soldiers when disciplined. The men are of low stature, and most of them old or very young. They discover extraordinary submission and love for their officers, who are all young and handsome. From the goodness of their dispositions in everything—for the boors are much better treated by these savages than by the polished French and English—from the goodness of their disposition, which by the bye shows the rectitude of human nature before it is vitiated by example or prejudice, it is to be hoped that their King's laudable though late endeavours to civilize and instruct them in the principles of Christianity will meet with success." This very learned writer adds, "The French held them at first in great contempt, but they have met them so often of late, and seen them in the front of so many battles, that they firmly believe there are twelve battalions of them in the army instead of two." Our ancestors a hundred years ago were plucky, goodish, heathen, savages!

The traveller who makes the tour of Deeside, guide-book in hand, on emerging from a beautiful birch wood four miles beyond Ballater, will have his attention directed to a little hamlet on the hillside, and by referring to his trusty directory, will learn that "this is by many thought to be a good specimen of the old Highland clachan; and if it is, they must have been but indifferent places, the decay of which there is very little reason to lament, for they can in no manner of way be compared to our new villages with their spacious squares, their houses built of stone and lime, ornamented with chimneys and stately glass windows, and slate roofs, whereas the houses of this clachan are but built of turf or divot, or stone and clay at the best, and have nothing but timber lums, and pitiful small windows through which it is scarcely possible to get a glimpse of the blessed light of day." This is the MICRAS.

Although no memory remains of any soldier, belonging to the Highland regiments that embarked for the Franco-American war, returning to his native glen, yet many people on Deeside will recollect that in the above described hamlet, and not in one of its best houses, there lived forty years ago an old man named Ian Allanach, or in English, John Stewart, whose delight it was on the long winter evenings to recount to greedy audiences his adventures in Germany, when a private in Keith's Highlanders.

Ian, though no boastful hero, was as proud of having served under the Prince of Brunswick as the Laird of Drumthwhacket was of having been a Chevalier under "the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, the Lion of the North"; and, like that worthy, was in the habit of solving all military problems by an appeal to what his beau-ideal of a warrior had done, or might have been expected to do, in similar circumstances.

It was easy to set the old soldier on his hobby. A reference to any warlike exploit or feat of arms or generalship would suffice to introduce an account of something of a like nature achieved or experienced in the German war; and no battle either in the Peninsular or Continental campaigns of the first Napoleon was equal in his estimation to the action at Fellinghausen. It was characteristic of all his stories that, if they did not begin with an account of this engagement, they were sure in some way or other to lead to it. He had so often "fought his battle o'er again," and in the same unvarying language, that most of his listeners could repeat the narrative almost as accurately as himself. Though the battle story had been told every night in the week, he never tired of it, nor did it ever fail to awaken in him the ardour of the military days of his youth, often to the extent of rendering him oblivious of his present circumstances. This forgetfulness was sometimes taken

advantage of by the more youthful and frolicsome of his hearers to play off ludicrous practical jokes upon him, more to amuse the company than to ridicule the mental absentee; for Ian was good-natured and a great favourite with the young.

Nothing provoked him more than to hear Napoleon's war tactics extolled. The world had rung with that warrior's fame, but Ian disallowed it. If any one remarked, "Wisna that good generalship o' Boney?"

"Good generalship!" Ian would contemptuously exclaim, "if he had advanced that way against the Prince of Brunswick, he would have taught him another lesson."

Whether Ian Allanach ever became acquainted with the failure of his hero in the campaign of 1792 against revolutionary France, or in 1806 on the disastrous field of Jena against Napoleon, or with his death in the dingy old castle of Altona, is not certain; but if he had heard of them, the knowledge had no influence on his opinion as to the relative merits of the two generals. He remained to the last firm in the belief that Bonaparte was no match for his favourite hero in the art of war.

Ian was fond of society, and the pink of company to him was a good listener. In the winter nights, if no visitors appeared early in the evening at his own fireside, he would go in quest of them to his neighbours', and where he planted himself for the forenight there was generally no lack of company. Let one fancy to himself the ben, or kitchen end of some auld warl' house, open to the rafters, and everything above the low walls japanned with smoke, a long settle, with a table, styled a' *dresser*, lining one side, a row of chairs and stools, with the muckle "rin wheel"—often removed in the evening for the sake of room—skirting the other, the seats occupied by the more aged visitors, and the remaining space

filled to the door with juveniles as they best could huddle together; the gudeman in the chimney lug on one side of the hearth, and Ian similarly enthroned on the other, and he will have a pretty fair picture of a forenigh meeting in the Braes of Micras fifty years ago.

At such time and place the business of the evening generally began with the gudeman asking some question regarding the German war, as,

"Well, Ian, what did the Germans think o' you Highlanders, when ye went ower among them?"

"I kenna well what they thought," Ian would reply, "for I never could understan' their gibberish; but I can tell ye it wisna lang when the Prince o' Brunswick thocht muckle o's, an' I'm sair mistaen if he didna gar his father vrett to his cousin, King George, to thank him for sendan' sic brave soldiers to him.* But as for the German bodies, it's my thocht that they took us at first for wild savages, an' wadna come near 's for fear we would jump upo' them an' eat them. They had a sort o' notion that in our ain country we ran wild among the hills, and that we cu'd hardly be catched ava', an' gin we werena taen whan we were young we cu'd never be tamed, but wid tak' the first chance o' rinnan' aff again like mad. But we let them see at Fellinghausen that rinnan' aff wisna what we were best at."

And then Ian would strike into an animated account of the battle—

"Ah! fine do I mind that nicht i' the middle o' summer [15th July, 1761], when after we had taen our supper we

* This was really the case. Besides expressions of his approbation in general orders, the Duke of Brunswick wrote a private letter to his Britannic Majesty, thanking him for having sent to his aid such a gallant body of troops as the Highlanders had shown themselves to be.

received orders to get under arms, and hold ourselves ready to march at a moment's notice."

In the battle narrative Ian affected a style above his ordinary mode of expression. His command of English was too poor to serve his purpose, and he had a ludicrous way of giving English accents to Scotch words when compelled to use them. He generally, however, relapsed entirely into his native Doric if he happened to be driven off his usual line of march by a question, or request for an explanation.

"There was a great stir among us," he would continue, "everybody wondered what was to happen, for we had not heard that the French were near. In about half an hour in there came two dragoons, galloping as hard as they could. They were at once admitted into the commander's tent, and several officers got orders to be in waiting. Out they came again in about another half hour, and each officer went to his own company and regiment, and then we were filed off at the back o' supper time along the road. First there were the grenadiers, and we came next. This wisna as we ees't to march, for we an' the grenadiers were maist aften hin'most ; so we thought there must be something bye ordinar' tae dee.

"We had gone on in this way for eight or nine miles, when in there came more dragoons, galloping like the others. It was now clear day-light, and nothing was to be seen. We then got orders to halt. We hadna been here long when we heard, as gin it had been to the south-east o' 's, the sound of a drum ; and then came more dragoons, and again we were marched at quick speed for about another mile, the sound of the drums getting louder and louder, and at last we saw colours flying, and begonets glancing nae twa miles awa'. And what was this but an army under the old Duke, that the French were tryan' to keep from joining us, but we were

afore han' wi' them ! Now both armies had got together in spite o' them.

"It was thought that after this the French would not attack us, but we were mistaken there. The Prince did not trust to that, and so we were still kept under arms. We didna get ony breakfast that morning, though we had been marching all night.

"Weel, there was a good big hillock on our left as gin it had been half a mile or so in front of where we were halted ; and his Highness, and some more officers of the staff took some cavalry and galloped off to the top of it. There they stood a good while looking wi' their spy-glasses and speaking together. When they came back, we Highlanders were immediately marched to the hillock with twelve or fourteen cannons, and artillerymen to work them. We could see a long way along the road, and over the plain a little to the south-west of us, where our men were deploying.

"We had not been long here when we saw two or three dragoons coming galloping along the road, and on they came till they were fired at by the out-posts of our army, and then they retreated. After them others came, now and then, in parties of threes and fours, galloping here, and galloping there. Some o' them came gey near where we were. After a little they stopped coming, and then we saw a great stour in the south-east, and by and bye we heard the drums. It was then that General Keith came forward, and says he,

" ' Now, Highlanders ! there's the French coming. Let me see that ye stand your ground, an' gie auld Scotland an' me cause to be proud o' ye.' "

"We gave him a cheer and then stood to arms. By this time we could see the enemy spreading out on the plain, little more than half a mile away. It was not long when they threw out two or three regiments of cavalry ; and away they galloped straight north.

“ ‘These fellows mean to be at us,’ said Keith, ‘but we’ll be ready for them.’

“We were then drawn up behind the guns, facing to the north-east, with our backs on our own men, so that we could not see what was going on, but in two or three minutes such a noise of cannons got up that you could not hear your own word.

“ ‘Form to receive cavalry,’ cried Keith ; and we had hardly got into squares when they were upon us. On they came, waving their swords.

“ ‘Fire !’ cried Keith ; and we gave them a volley.

“They reeled a bit ; but on they came again faster than ever, and tried to make their horses jump on the points of our begonets. Then they wheeled about and dashed at us again. They did this three or four times, trying to cut some of us down with their swords, and firing pistols in our very faces ; but still they could not get in amongst us. Whenever a man fell, another took his place. At last they gave it up for a bad job. But they got at us some way with their cannon, and we had to move our position. Then came the cavalry again, but we gave them such a volley this time that they did not come to close quarters. A great hash o’ them fell, and the rest galloped off. The din at our backs at this time was extraordinary, but we had not much time to think of it.

“ ‘Fix begonets, face to the right, double file,’ cried Keith. We had scarcely got into position when the French guards were within musket shot of us. The balls were flying over our heads like hailstones, but they did not kill many, for they could not get at us till they came on to the brow of the hillock. When they did come we made a dash at them with our begonets, and tumbled them back with heavy losses ; for, as soon as they turned from the begonet

charge, we let drive at them wi' our musket shot ; but just then we got a dreadful volley ourselves, and had to get back to our old position. On they came again, and we played them the same over again, but we did not venture quite so far this time, and did not lose so many men.

“The third time they came on we tried them in a different fashion. We went farther back ourselves, and let them farther on to the riggin. Then we fired our shots first, fixed our begonets, and dashed at them ; but now we did not give them time to turn, but down the brae after them helter skelter. They did not think we would do this, for when their second line fired they killed far more of their own men than of ours ; and then they turned too, and we after them. They had to cross the line of our cannon, and this put them clean out of order. What happened after this I can hardly tell you, for we were now in the smoke of the battle, and marching forward. Though the French were in full retreat, they were still wheeling round and firing at us ; so we got orders to halt, and there was no more fighting that day.

“After we had got to our quarters, Keith comes forward, and says he, ‘You have done nobly to-day, my brave fellows ; but the French are not half thrashed yet. I think we shall have to beat them again to-morrow.’ We cheered him, as much as to say, ‘We’re ready.’

“All that night we lay on our arms, and after breakfast next morning we marched to the town of Fellinghausen. The road passes through the town, but there the French was posted and had thrown up barricades and planted cannon to keep us out. When we came in sight of them a council of war was called and after that Keith comes round where we were, and says he—

“‘The French mean to let us attack them to-day ; there

they are wrong. They are bold at making an attack, but they are not so firm at resisting one. We'll soon drive them from their position yonder. Now, my lads, at the word of command we're to storm, and I'm sure we'll do it gallantly.'

"Two or three batteries were then thrown up, and the cannon began. They played at one another for half an hour or so, and made a terrible noise, but we could not see what execution was done. The French arena bad at long range, but their patience is unco short. At last out came a detachment of their army on the north side of the town, as gin they meant to turn our flank, and then we and the Grenadier Guards were drawn up to face them. On they came very boldly, wi' a regiment of cavalry on their right. They were so very grand looking that I thought we were all to be smashed to pieces.

"'Steady, my Highlanders,' cried Keith, 'there's help at hand.' With that a regiment of our dragoons came trotting up, and took their station on our left. On the enemy came, bold as lions, and fired into our lines. A monstrous hash fell. Then we gave them our charge, and rushed at them double quick wi' the begonets. They did not wait for us, but turned back towards the town. We were close at their heels, and in we plunged a' thegither among their cannon. Two or three regiments o' Brunswickers came up at this time, and we drove the French from their guns at all points. They tried again and again to take them from us, but to no effect. At last they came in a strong body up the street, but now our cannon were brought forward and made terrible havoc o' them.

"'Now, my lads,' cried Keith, 'clear the Gallowgate!'

"With that we down upon them with a great cheer. There was some begonet wark there, I can tell ye. The front o' the column reeled back. We gave another cheer,

and then they ran like mad. But just as they were getting clear o' the street at the ither end, they were taken in flank by a Prussian regiment, and broken to pieces. Then there was such a pursuing, an' cheering, an' roaring, an' hacking, an' hashing, as the like was never seen afore or since.

"That was Fellinghausen, sirs, and grim wark it was!"

"Bo-ooney!" Ian would here contemptuously exclaim, "wi' his mail clad cuirassiers wad hae deen little there! Dinna tell me. Gin the Prince o' Brunswick wi' sic an army as he had that day cu'd hae met him, he wad hae made mice-meat o' him and his cuirassiers baith."

Ian's excitement had by this time reached the culminating point, and had anyone been hardy enough to question his assertion he would have run no little risk of receiving a tangible proof of the physical powers of the old champion of the Brunswicker.

"That evening," Ian would conclude, "General Keith made a speech to us, and thankit us, in the name o' the Prince o' Brunswick, for our gallant behaviour. We had little trouble o' the French for nearly a year after this."

Though the battle of Fellinghausen is not the important event in history which it was in the eyes of the old soldier, it was of sufficient consequence to induce the French to withdraw from Westphalia, and had a considerable influence in bringing the Seven Years' war to a close.

In the general order after the battle the Duke of Brunswick thus refers to the conduct of the troops—"His Serene Highness Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick has been graciously pleased to order Colonel Beckwith to signify to the brigade he has the honour to command his entire approbation of their conduct on the 15th and 16th of July. The soldier-like perseverance of the Highland regiments, in resisting and repulsing the repeated attacks of the chosen

troops of France, has deservedly gained them the highest honours. The ardour and activity with which the Grenadiers pushed and pursued the enemy, and the trophies which they have taken, justly entitle them to the highest encomiums. The intrepidity of the little band of Highlanders merits the greatest praise." Colonel Beckwith adds, "The humanity and generosity with which the soldiers treated the great flock of prisoners they took does them as much honour as their subduing the enemy." Beckwith was the Brigadier-Commander, but Ian recognised no officer between Keith, the Colonel of his own regiment, and the Commander-in-Chief. Next to the Prince of Brunswick, Colonel Keith was his idol; and through him, and him alone, did he understand all communications were carried on between the regiment and headquarters.

The foregoing is but a brief epitome of Ian's account of the battle of Fellinghausen. When narrated at length, with all the explanations which his audience required, it usually occupied the whole of a fore-night's sederunt. On the following evenings considerable tact was required to keep any other story he might begin from drifting into this, which, if he once entered upon it, no art could seduce him either to intermit or abbreviate.

"Now, Ian," the gudeman would lead off, with the intention of keeping the old soldier off his favourite narrative, "you told us last night how you beat the French at Fellinghausen, but didna the French ever get the better o' you?"

"Ah, weel! I canna say that they ever gained a battle a' thegither, but ance or twice they were gey hard on's. I've heard it said that they did ance gain something like a battle at a place they ca' Briggan-up-some (Bergen op Zoom), but that wis lang afore I jined the force. I mind mysel', though, we had rather the warst o' a battle, owan' to some coordly louns o' Germans that widna' stan' up.

"It was i' the go-hairst, weel on to Hallow-een, a Major Pollox, ane o' the Grenadier officers, a clever an' daran' chiel, took about a hunner o' his ain regiment, an' as mony o' us, an' ye widna hinder him tae gang an' beat up the French quarters i' the nicht time, wi' the design o' takan' the Marshal himsel' prisoner. Naebody ever heard tell o' the like, 'cep' ance i' the auld wars atween England and Scotland, when they say the Douglas very nearly carriet aff the English king f'ae the mids o' his ain army. Aweel, as I was sayan', Pollox, he took twa hunner men wi' him, an' awa he gaed to capture the French Marshal. We marched as quiet 's pussy, an' managed to get past the ooter sentries unnoticed. But just when we was at the door o' the house where we kent the Marshal was, the guardsman called out in his ain lan'age, 'Kee-wheue?' *

"Pollox made nae answer, but rushed at him wi' his drawn sword, an' ran him richt through the heart. But a dyan' man, they say, is a dangerous man. He turned just as he was fa'an, an' fired his pistol into Pollox's breast, an' baith dropt to the grun' stock dead. But the firin' o' the pistol had given the alarm, an' we had to cut our way through the enemy back to our ain army. It was a terrible ventursome thing, but we didna lose a man, less poor Pollox.

"Aweel, next day an attack was made on the French. Our regiment was in the front line, an' up we marched till within musket shot, though their cannon wis blazing at us a' the time; but then we came to a ditch, an' a big bank o' earth on the ither side o't. An' syne the French, hidan' behind this bank, opened on us a terrible fire, an' the Germans turned tail, an' ran for't. A great lot o' us were

* Ian's manner of pronouncing the French *Qui vive?* scarcely admits of being represented by letters. Beginning with an articulate sound, it ended in a whistle, of which Kee-wheue may give some idea.

killed, an' we was mad wi' rage that we cu'dna get at them. We widna rin, an' we cu'dna advance, so there we stood firan' awa' till our ammunition was nearly done, an' makan' naething o't. At last positive orders came f'ae the Prince himsel', that we should withdraw; an' our general was blamed for keepan' 's so lang there after the rest of the army had retired. But we paid the French back for this at Fellinghausen.

“Ah, fine do I mind that nicht i' the middle o' summer, when after we had taen our supper,” and so forth to the end of the narrative, with a march as resolute and unswerving as his conduct had been in the action itself.

CHAPTER X

IAN ALLANACH

(continued)

STALKING A SHARPSHOOTER



ANOTHER incident of the war, in which Ian was himself the principal actor, was generally introduced by some one asking how many of the French he supposed he had slain during the campaign. This question, which made the girls of the party stare at him as if he had been an ogre, was generally evaded by himself, but when pressed, notwithstanding that he fenced for a time, it usually led to the following story—

“Weel, ye see, i’ the heat o’ a battle ye dinna ken how many ye kill, or gin ye kill ony ava’. Ye maun do your duty, obey orders, an’ fire awa’ as well as ye can into the ranks o’ the enemy. There’s sae mony firan’, an’ sic a smoke, an’ stramash, that ye canna tell what effect your shots hae.”

“Ah, but Ian,” some pertinacious questioner would insist, “at a begonet charge ye cudna be in ony doubt.”

“That, indeed,” the old soldier would reply, still warding off a question that he had evidently no pleasure in answering, “that, indeed. But the French didna often stan’ up when we charged wi’ the begonet. Ony way, it is the pairt o’

brave soldiers to drive a' afore them in a battle, whatever be the consequence till himsel' or tae ithers ; an' I canna see that there is ony sin in a man doing his duty as bravely as he can. Only ance had I to do wi' a business that I'm no vera clear about whether it was richt or no."

All the boys in the company would here eagerly shout—"Tell us the story, Ian ; oh, tell us the story !"

"Weel, laddies, though I'm nae vera proud about it, I'll tell ye how it happened.

"Ye maun ken that the French didna always meet us in fair field as at Fellinghausen, but sometimes they wid get into a fortified town, an' try to keep their hold there in spite o's. Now, a fortified town is like this"—and here Ian with the charred end of a splinter of firewood, called a *caunle*, would sketch upon the hearthstone the fortifications, and the manner of approaching them by means of trenches.

"Weel, ye see," he would continue, pointing to a particular part of the draught, "as we were working in there ae time, some way or other there wis aye some o's shot every day, an' naebody cud fin' out how it could be. Every plan had been ta'en to protect us f'ae the French sharpshooters, but somebody wis aye killed, an' naebody kent how the shots cud get into the trenches. At lang last it was found out ; an' how do you think it wis ? Ane o' them had got intil a thick tree, an' wis firan' at us out among the branches.

"Aweel, the day after it was found out, it was our company's turn to work where the danger wis ; an' just when we were drawn up, afore we were marched intil the trenches, the Captain, he says, 'Is there anybody here who has shot a deer in the forest ?' Naebody made answer."

"I'm sure, Ian," someone who had known John in his ante-military days would remark, "I'm sure, Ian, ye were a good han' at that ance—why didna ye speak out, man ?"

"A body shu'dna be ower rash answeran' onyhow," Ian would reply with a show of Scotch caution in the remark, "an' I'm thinkan' I micht hae been as weel to hae hadden my tongue a'thegither.

"Howsomever, after waitan' a little an' naebody speakan', I steps forward, an' says I, 'Captain, I have,' says I.

"Follow me,' says the Captain, an' then he tak's me out ower a bit, an' pointan' to a clomp o' heich auld trees near a mill, says he,

"Do you think you could stalk these trees?'

"What's in the trees, Captain?' says I.

"Well,' says he, 'I am much mistaken if the French sharpshooter who is killing so many of our men is not commanding our trenches from the top of one of those trees there; and if you think you could stalk him, and bring him down, I promise you it will not be forgotten to you.'

"I don't like the job, Captain,' says I, 'for though I have stalked the deer, they're different f'ae sharpshooters. Howsomever, I'll try, Captain,' says I.

"I had nae sooner said the word than I began to rue. But it was noo ower late, an' so I made ready, an' set out.

"Ye may be sure I took terrible care, creepan' f'ae ae hillock to anither, syne at the back o' a dyke or a hedge till I got in among the trees. There wis ae thing I hadna to notice that wu'd hae spiled me wi' the deer—I hadna to notice the win', and that helpit me some. Teetan' roun' an auld stump, what shu'd I see but a chiel wi' three guns hangan' on the branches aside him, gey weel up the tree, an' gloweran' sharp the way o' our trenches. I thought my vera heart wid loup out, it was duntan' at sic a rate. It wisna fleg; but I thocht I wisna muckle better than a murderer to snake upon a man that way, an' shoot him as gin he had been a craw; I thocht it wisna richt. Nae but I was puttan'

mysel' in about as muckle danger as he was in, but for a' that—.

"I got ready three times an' aye rued, an' took down the gun f'ae my shu'der again. At last, thinks I, this'll no do ava'. I'll gie him a chance. So I steps out ahint the stump where I wis hidan', an' cries up to him, 'Tak' tent, my billy,' an' wi' that I fires at him. Down he came to the grun' wi' a thud that wu'd hae killed him though he had been a wild cat, let alane a man."

The boys at this point in the narrative generally gave vent to their hitherto restrained feeling, by shouting,

"Well done, Ian! quite right, quite right! the scoundrel had no business there. Ye gave him a better chance than he deserved. He didna cry to you when he was shootan' you i' the trenches, 'Tak' tent, my billies.'"

"Maybe, laddies, maybe," the old soldier would continue, "but I never let my een see him, but off I gaed as fast as I cu'd rin, an' as good need had, for I was within range o' the French guns.

"When I got back, the Captain calls me up, an' says he, 'Well done, my brave fellow, you will be relieved from trench duty to-day, and here's a guinea to enjoy yourself.' I never heard onything mair about it. It wisna lang after this when peace was made, an' we were ordered home, or maybe I micht hae got promotion."

The boys of the present age, daily surfeited with glowing accounts in their penny or halfpenny newspapers, of sieges and battles where half a million soldiers are engaged, and where the slain of a single day are more in number than the old Duke of Brunswick ever had under his command, may think that their fathers must have been easily amused when in their boyhood they listened with such absorbing

attention to Ian's trifling tales of war. But neither the men nor the boys of the present generation ought to suppose that the military deeds of our fathers were either less heroic, or are less interesting because of the smallness of the armies in which they served, or the primitive character of the arms they used. Individual heroism is most apparent when the numbers are few ; and indeed it requires less courage in a man to march to an attack surrounded with ten thousand fellow soldiers, than when he forms one of a thousand, even though the enemy be proportionally small ; and the interest attaching to an engagement, in which personal valour is sought for, is in the inverse ratio of the numbers engaged, just as a duel is a more sensational event than the battle of Gravelotte.

Nor ought we to hold of little account the art and means of war in ages past, lest judging so we may be so judged ; for who knows that the soldiers of a hundred years hence may not think as little of the battle of Sedan, where a hundred thousand men were made prisoners, of the sieges of Strasbourg, Metz, and Paris, and of our engines of death, chassepots, mitrailleuses, and rifled artillery, as we do of the battle of Fellinghausen, and the old flint musket? Anyhow, the backward glance may speed the onward march. Nature's powers are not yet exhausted. If so much had been done in the century past, it will be to our and our children's disgrace if as much more be not done in the century coming, not, it is to be hoped, in the invention and improvement of engines of destruction, but in the elevation of our race, in the spread of knowledge, and in the cultivation of the arts of peace ; so that in the eyes of future generations the history of our wars may appear the monstrous outcome of the savage passions of an ignorant age, and men may marvel how, for the settlement of petty

disputes of our rulers, we should have abnegated the function of reason, and in imitation of the most savage of the brute creation bent all our energies to the barbarous expedient of sweeping each other from the earth.

But whatever may be the prevailing sentiments and manners of society on Deeside fifty years hence, with such tales as are above narrated could an old soldier beguile to a whole neighbourhood the dullness of the longest winter evening fifty years ago. This, however, was not to last for aye. "Old age," as the proverb saith, "does not come alone;" and with Ian's increasing years came infirmities of which, in his nightly wanderings, he did not always take proper account.

One night about Christmas, when the ground was hard with frost, and the paths treacherous with ice, Ian was returning home, late but quite sober. With the aid of his trusty pike-staff, his constant companion in these nocturnal peregrinations, he had managed to overcome the difficulties and escape the dangers of the road, till just before his own door, when, probably feeling himself more at home and getting less guarded in picking his steps, his foot slipped, and from the fall he received, he dislocated his shoulder. For some days he could not be made believe but that his injury was slight, but at length he was prevailed on to send for the doctor, if only to ascertain what was the matter. On being informed that his shoulder was out of joint he replied, "Doctor, I suppose you can easily mend it."

"I must tell you, Ian," said the Doctor, "I fear it will now be a difficult operation for me, and a painful one for you. You have been too long in sending for me."

"Just do your duty, Doctor," replied the veteran, "and never mind me."

After several ineffectual attempts, the Doctor resolved to

send for a brother practitioner to assist him, which caused a delay of some days more, the residence of the nearest medical man being then at Kincardine O'Neil, twenty-two miles distant. On his arrival, and in consultation, both expressed a fear that Ian might not be able to endure the operation. As yet Sir James Y. Simpson had not discovered the valuable anæsthetical properties of chloroform ; and it is questionable whether Ian would have considered it quite soldier-like to submit to such a method of evading pain, even had it been known. As it was, the medical men knew not well what to do ; but one of the neighbours to whom they had stated their difficulty, suggested that they should set Ian to give an account of the battle of Fellinghausen, adding—

“When ance he’s fairly intil the battle, I’s e gie ye my lug if he cares a button what ye dee wi’ his airm.”

As this, however unlikely to answer the expectation, was the best thing that could be done in the circumstances, they set about it.

“Well, Ian,” said the Doctor, who knew his peculiarities, “this is worse than anything that befel you at Fellinghausen.”

“Maybe sae,” replied Ian, “but it’s little to what happened to mony a braw lad. Fie ! fie ! Doctor ; gin ye had seen Fellinghausen ! Ah, fine do I mind that nicht i’ the middle o’ summer, when after we had ta’en our supper,” and so on, the Doctor by well-timed remarks exciting unwonted warmth in the narrative.

The dislocation was not reduced without the greatest efforts ; but Ian never once interrupted his story, or allowed an expression of suffering to escape his lips. The first use to which he put the restored arm was to extend it in imitation of Keith, calling out at the same time, “Steady, my Highlanders ; there’s help at hand.” Though the time of

the medical gentlemen was very precious, Ian held them there, as the Ancient Mariner the wedding guest, till the whole story was told, with the addition of an indignant denial of "Boney's" superiority as a general to the Duke of Brunswick.

Ian survived this accident many years, and told his war tales as usual, but he now less frequently went abroad at night. Though his iron frame had withstood the wear of ninety winters, his life might properly be said to have ended with his return from the Seven years' war. To fight his battles o'er again was the delight, almost the business, of the rest of his days, and grew upon him as he advanced in age, till the scenes of memory had become to him more vividly real than those of sense.

At length his last battle story was told, and about the year 1833 he capitulated to the universal conqueror, and was laid with his kindred dust in the sweet churchyard of Crathie. Though a patriot to his heart's core, he has shared the fate imprecated by the poet on "the wretch concentrated all in self." He was the last survivor of his family, and few, if any, now living can point out the spot where his ashes repose. There, "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung," *requiescat in pace*.

CHAPTER XI

GEORGE BROWN ; OR THE LAST OF THE SENNACHIES

“ His legendary song could tell
Of ancient deeds, so long forgot ;
Of feuds, whose memory was not ;
Of forests, now laid waste and bare ;
Of towers, which harbour now the hare ;
Of manners, long since changed and gone ;
Of chiefs, who under their greystone
So long had slept, that fickle fame
Had blotted from her rolls their name,
And twined round some new minion’s head
The fading wreath for which they bled ;—
In sooth, ’twas strange, this old man’s verse
Could call them from their marble hearse.”

—*Lay of the Last Minstrel.*



THE farmhouse of Torgalter commands one of the finest views of the valley of the Dee to be obtained from any point between Ballater and Balmoral. Far to the right, the summits of the Braemar Grampians dimly appear as great mounds on the horizon, but become more distinct and bold in their outline as the eye follows them, one by one, crag and ridge, till they culminate where “Dark Lochnagar” rears his boldest front far into the sky—a Saul among his brethren, head and shoulders over all the rest. Then away to the left, with little



LOOKING EAST FROM TORGALTER—RUINS OF OLD GREYSTONE IN FOREGROUND.

variety of feature save Mont Keen's bold peak, like a turret on a rampart, the broad wall stretches till lost in the distance towards the German Ocean. The nearer outposts of this array of mountains, Craignaban, Craiguise, and the Coil Hills, are seen to great advantage, while from Craig-gowan to Craigan-darroch, with a bird's-eye view of Abergeldie opposite, the entire valley of the Dee is spread out as if on canvas, in all its beautiful variety of field and forest, and the soul of the whole, the silver river, in many a noble sweep and graceful bend, threading its mazy way with ceaseless song to its far off home in the deep.

The main features of this scene are unalterable, but the minor details have undergone much change since the century began. As an instance: this same picturesquely situated farmstead has taken the place of a considerable clachan, the twin of another less prominent, but more populous, that nestled cosily in the "howe-burn" close beside. This latter, whose sponsor was a huge boulder of granite resting on the summit of a neighbouring eminence, rejoiced in the name of Greystone. But notwithstanding the stability and sterling qualities of the patron, the protégé has vanished entirely from the scene.

These two hamlets formed together a place of considerable note in the olden time. With the exception of a church and school—the latter not much in repute in those days—they contained within themselves all that was deemed necessary for the social and physical comfort of the inhabitants. Here the weaver, the carpenter, and the miller of the district had taken up their residence; and as for other trades, such as that of shoemaker and shopkeeper, they had not yet risen into separate branches of industry. Every man manufactured his own and dependants' brogues, and any luxury of foreign importation was not dreamed of.

About the period when Ian Allanach was fighting the battle of Fellinghausen for the first time, there was born in this same hamlet of Greystone a very remarkable man, of whom some account is here proposed to be given.

GEORGE BROWN was of humble but respectable parentage. His ancestors, with small fluctuations of fortune, had been the tenants of an oxgate of land for an unknown length of time. Indeed, for aught that appears to the contrary, they might have been the lineal descendants of an aboriginal family. Most of them had never wandered beyond the bounds of their native district, knew no wants but such as it could supply, felt no ambition to live otherwise than their fathers before them had lived, and saw no reason why their children after them should not be content with similar ways and means.

Entertaining these highly conservative ideas, and despising all new-fangled notions about improvement of either mind or manners, George's immediate ancestor was not the man to foster any bookish disposition his boy may have early displayed. It was the fashion of the time for the father, or rather the mother, to impart the first elements of education—early education it ought scarcely to be called, because seldom was a child initiated into the mysteries of the Roman alphabet before his ninth or tenth birthday; and most mysterious must the thing have even then appeared to him, it being his first introduction to an unknown language. It was no unusual thing to find a boy or a girl with a good ear who could glibly enough run over whole pages of the Shorter Catechism without comprehending the import of a single sentence, or even the meaning of a single word.

Often in the winter season some neighbour, out of other employment, would be found to undertake the elementary instruction of the children of a small district, and so relieve

the mother's hand, as it was expressed. In return for this service he received his victuals and the proceeds of the *cock-fight*, with which humane spectacle the labours of the short session were annually wound up. The instruction, if it deserved the name, was of the same unintelligent and vicious type as that practised under the parental care, with the addition, however, of a larger allowance of birch (leather), which doubtless awakened much scholarly ardour in the youthful mind.

Subjected to this ordeal for two or three winters, the sons and daughters of a common man were supposed to be intellectually equipped for the discharge of the duties of their station in life. If they required more they could, and they generally did, finish off with a winter *raith* (three months) at the parish school, when they were "grown up," *i.e.*, forisfamiliaried. The benches of that seminary were accordingly, during this season, mostly occupied by men and women, whose mature intellects were duly sharpened by being made the butt of the coarse jokes and nicknames of the laird's ground officer—it would be a solecism to call him teacher, though he sat at his desk and drew his salary, such as it was. The schoolmaster in his treatment of his pupils must not be supposed to have outraged the usages of society, or to have been a Philistine above all men. He but reflected the manners of his betters, and in his style of address was only a low imitator of the judges of the land, as may be seen from Lord Cockburn's *Memorials*.

How much of this rough discipline George Brown passed through is not known, but it may be presumed it was either a minimum quantity, or his desire of knowledge was unquenchable; for it is certain that while yet a young lad he had read and fully mastered every printed volume within miles of his residence, and yet "was unsatisfied in getting, which was no sin."

This literature was almost wholly religious, consisting mainly of the Scriptures, with notes practical and critical by various divines, the Shorter Catechism, without comment, known in its spelling to all who had ever been at school, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Holy War, Baxter's Saints' Rest, and Boston's Fourfold State. He thus became a theologian at an early age; and, though by no means exclusively devoting his attention to that subject, it was the one which engaged by far the largest portion of his thoughts through life.

It was not long till his acquirements attracted the attention of others besides his companions and neighbours. Arrived at the age (about seventeen) when it was deemed proper that he should become a member of the Church of his fathers, he presented himself before the minister of Crathie for examination as to his fitness. The clergyman, the Rev. Murdoch M'Lennan, author of the popular Scottish ballad of "Sheriffmuir," was a man of no mean literary taste and attainments, of a benevolent, kindly disposition, and a keen discerner of character. Perceiving that George was no ordinary young man, and having ascertained by what means he had become possessed of so unusual an amount of Scriptural knowledge, he took an interest in him, fostered and directed his taste for reading by lending him such books as he judged would be attractive, and improving to his mind.

The American war of Independence was then at its height; but in those days none but the laird and the minister had access to the news. Through the kindness of the latter, George was allowed to peruse such intelligence of the great struggle as found its way into the *Aberdeen Journal*, then the only newspaper that circulated in the district. Of this privilege he was not slow to take advantage. America

soon became to him a land of romance. He was fired with a desire to know all about it—its discovery, its colonization, the history of the early settlers, the hardships they had to endure, and the hopes that cheered them, their conflicts with the Indians, and the inhuman barbarities these, at the instigation of the French, committed upon them in the first war. On all these matters, so far as the manse library contained information, he was fully read ; and being the only oracle open to the peasantry of the district, his company was eagerly sought, and his father's house nightly thronged with listeners.

It was thus he acquired the art of effectively communicating to others his own stock of knowledge, and of imparting to his narratives the charm of graphic description. It was one of his characteristics to muse on whatever he read till he obtained a representation of the scene in his own mind, drawn to the minutest detail by his own lively imagination—not perhaps always correct in every particular, but always vivid and dramatic. The picture thus formed he described as he beheld it himself, and hence the force of his delineations. Deriving the outline or suggestive idea through the staid medium of the English language, and being required to employ his own romantic Gaelic as the vehicle of communicating his thoughts to others, he was led, irrespective of the natural bent of his mind, to add fire to his narratives and colour to his sketches. Beyond this his tales were strictly true to fact. He never invented one merely to amuse, far less to deceive, though he often dealt in parables as well as proverbs for the purpose of instruction. It was, besides, not till he had grown over to years and had established a reputation for high moral worth as well as mental endowments, that his gifts of vivid description were much exercised. Though his more solid qualities procured for him the esteem

and admiration of those above him in station, it was doubtless this art that earned for him the extraordinary fame with which his name was associated in the minds of his own class, and is still associated in the recollection of those of them who survive, and who even yet speak with rapture of the sage old man whom they knew in their youth.

The writer has heard one of these relate that, being a boy of a delicate constitution, he was for some time greatly troubled with sleepless nights, and that the good old man would often come to his bedside, and with tales that had rivetted his own youthful imagination—tales of the Red Indian and descriptions of the primeval forests, so vividly told that the sufferer thought he actually beheld the tall trees and the naked savages—he beguiled him from the world of sense to the regions of the imagination, and thence to dream-land and the realms of sleep.

But besides affording him opportunities of becoming acquainted with the present transactions and past history of his country, Mr. M'Lennan, who was an Islesman by birth, and had thus been nurtured on the very Parnassus of Highland lore, opened up to his protégé his own rich stores of Celtic legend and song. These he drank in as if they had been nectar sent him from the gods, treasured them up in his retentive memory, and in after life made many a long winter evening fly but too quickly away with narratives of creach and foray, of love and war, or with recitations from Ossian and other Highland bards less fortunate than him, who have found no MacPherson to rescue their names from oblivion.

CHAPTER XII

GEORGE BROWN

(continued)



ORD MACAULAY was wont to say that, should Milton's "Paradise Lost" happen to be destroyed, he believed he could restore every line of it from memory, and the same might have been said of George Brown with respect to Ossian's poems. It is deeply to be regretted that the mantle of his genius did not descend to some one of his many listeners. Mere fragments—a line here and there—is all that the memories of those who heard them most frequently have retained of many a heroic poem, soft song, and sad elegy. Even these fragments are now gone into irrecoverable oblivion with the decease of the few who attempted to commit them to memory.

It is not difficult to assign a sufficient reason for the loss of this lore. A change of manners, of taste, or of occupation among a people does much to obliterate the recollection of a literature, born and bred in a state of society that has passed away and lost its interest. But more effectual than any or all of these is a change of language. Such a change had, indeed, made some progress on Deeside during the lifetime of George Brown, but within a period of twenty years after his death it had reached an entire

revolution. In 1830 there was scarcely a family in the district in which he resided whose fireside language was not the Gaelic. In 1850 there were just as few who had not adopted the English; and now (1870) only very old people use the ancient tongue. The prose traditions may still be gathered up, because during the transition they were frequently repeated in both languages; but it has fared otherwise with the poetic, which do not admit of a translation without loss of character, and consequently of interest.

Many years ago the writer heard an aged person repeat a good few lines of a poem styled the *Claigeann* (Skull) which is said to have been a favourite with George. The poem seemed to be somewhat in the strain of Blair's "Grave," but the reflections were more quaint and less philosophical, though, from the unconnected lines remembered and the manner of the reciter, it was difficult to form a decided opinion: a couplet, then a long pause with serious efforts at recollection, then an exclamation — "Oh, if I could remember," then another couplet, then a longer pause with more strenuous efforts at recollection, then another exclamation—"Oh! it was beautiful! but I have forgot it."

The writer has never met with anyone in the Highlands who was in the least acquainted with it, and he has in consequence been laid to fancy that it must have been a fugitive piece by the author of "The Sherifmuir" himself, the effect of which he may have been playfully trying on George. If such indeed was its origin, it is doubly to be regretted that it has perished, as it was likely to have had an excellence not often attained by Gaelic poetry.*

* The poem is by Dugald Buchanan (1716-68), the most popular religious poet in Gaelic. He was a native of Balquhiddy, and was Schoolmaster and afterwards Evangelist and Catechist at Rannoch. There is a translation of the *Claigeann* by Prof. Blackie.—D.

Had this good man survived a few years longer, it is not improbable that he might have put his pupil on some way of elevating himself in the social scale, and of occupying a sphere where his talents would have had an ample scope for good, and might have gained for him something more than an ephemeral and merely local reputation. Death, however, takes no account of such things. Their intercourse had been sufficiently long and intimate to enable the master to lay the stamp of his character upon the scholar. Thenceforth the youth was left to hew out his own path through life.

George had now reached the age when it was necessary that he should betake himself to some means of earning his own livelihood. He accordingly selected one of the few indoor occupations that held out that prospect, and became a weaver of woollen stuffs. This was a trade in which it was supposed no steady man could fail for want of employment. Many young men adopted it, and there was work for all, for, with the exception of the minister's Sunday clothes, there was not usually in the parish an article of male attire (and very few of female) that did not pass through the hands of the district weaver.

After a time, having by industry and economy procured for himself a comfortable home, he began to look around him for a partner in life. The result of this undertaking was not—so rumour went—as fortunate as might have been expected from a man of his sagacity. Love makes sport of wisdom. Her blessings are rarely in proportion to the sapience of the receiver. Indeed, if any law regulates their bestowal, it would rather appear to be that they are in the inverse ratio. It is needless to give instances; sacred history contains some, and the lights of modern literature have known of more. If love's gift to George was a Xanthippe, this was only one of the many respects in which,

to compare small men with great, he resembled the ancient Grecian sage. Whether or not our little Socrates was, like his great prototype, unequally yoked in matrimony, he had too much good sense not to make the best of his bargain, and there is no reason to believe that his mate rendered him unhappy.

Soon after his marriage he began a practice which he continued till the frailties of age broke in upon it. It was that of paying an annual visit to Aberdeen in search of books and to post himself up in the literary topics of the day. The distance was forty-seven miles by the turnpike, and the journey he always performed on foot. His stay in the town did not usually exceed a week, but during that short time he visited all the book shops, museums, and manufactories, and by conversation and acute observation laid up in his retentive memory a great store of materials for afterthought.

In one of these journeys he was overtaken by a storm, and obliged to seek shelter in the house of a small farmer in the parish of Culter. His conversation so engaged the family that time flew past unheeded till the preparations for the evening meal warned him that, if he meant to reach Aberdeen that night, there was no more time to be lost, and as the storm had considerably abated, he prepared to depart. The mother of the family, however, interposed—

“Ye’ll jist wait,” she said, “an’ tak yer supper wi’s; for the like o’ ye was never in my hoose afore.”

“I am very much obliged by your kindness,” replied George, “but it is a long way to Aberdeen, and I do not like to be very late in getting in.”

“It’s ower lang for you to gang the nicht. It’ll be vera dark, an’ the road, they say, is nae ower chancey; sae ye’ll jist tak a bit supper wi’s, an’ ye can get a bed tee, sic like as we hae to spare.”

George accepted the friendly offer under the impression that he would be allowed to pay for his victuals and accommodation. But on his proposing to do so, the gudewife, with a touch of injured hospitality in her manner, exclaimed,

“Pay for yer bed an’ bit supper! We micht as seen speer at you fat we hae tae pay for your stories. Na, na, weel awyte! we’re mair than pay’t already. But gin ye widna tak’ it amiss, I wid like tae ken fat ye are, an’ far ye come f’ae; for I canna mak ye out by a’thing i’ the warl’. Ye’re surely college bred, an’ yet ye dinna look like ane o’ that kind o’ folk.”

“No, my good woman,” replied George, “I was never at either college or grammar school; but am just a plain weaver from the Highlands of Deeside, where my forebears lived before me.”

“Weel, weel, weaver or no weaver, ye’re an extraordinar’ man, an’ mony ane has a kirk that wid gie something for your talent. But ye maun promise me, afore ye gang awa’, that as often as ye pass this way ye’ll stop a nicht wi’s; an’ as lang as I hae a hoose ye sanna want for onything it can afford.”

In after years George frequently visited this family, bringing the young members some little *fairen* from town, by way of sauce to his stories, and always held in high appreciation the kindness he uniformly received.

Though the cares of a large family by and bye pressed upon him, he still found time to pursue his old and favourite studies. He had gleaned from various sources a large amount of legendary lore relating to Deeside, and a better fortune attended his efforts to transmit these to posterity than fell to the lot of his poetic collections. Many of his stories were told and re-told from fireside to fireside till they became common property, and now form a considerable portion of the current legends of the district.

The skeletons of a few of the more historic have of late years been oftener than once collected and published, though without any knowledge on the part of the collectors that it was mainly owing to George Brown that they had not long ago perished. This is perhaps the only form in which they can now appear; for, after having lain bleaching in an ungenial climate for more than half a century, it would require the magician touch of another Scott to reinvest these bones with their complement of humanity and bring them before us in life character. Without any pretension to such an aim, the writer yet feels that this sketch would be very imperfect indeed did it not contain at least one of these tales, and that in as nearly as he can remember the very words in which he has often heard it told, though that was only at second hand from George Brown.*

* *See* Note VIII.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORY OF MUCKLE FLEEMAN

“’Twas thus the LATEST MINSTREL sung.”—*Scott*.



IN the days when Scotland had her ain king, though, as George Brown used to say, he was the last and about the queerest king she ever had, there fell out a terrible quarrel between the Gordons and the Forbeses. The quarrel, indeed, had begun many years before, when Mary was queen, and the good Regent Moray managed her affairs. It was that time that the Reformation was going on in this country, and John Knox by his preaching o' the true gospel put an end to papistry and false doctrine.

Weel, i' the north here they kent little o' what was going on i' the south. They had nae bibles an' couldna read them if they had got them, an' nae preacher like John Knox to tell them what was true an' what wasna. So they were a' papists thegither; nae that they ken't or care't muckle about religion o' any kind, but they just followed their great lords an' lairds that should hae ken't better.

Weel, ye see, the head o' the Gordons—he was a great papist, an' wouldna be hadden in by the good Regent and John Knox; an' who was like him, sae big an' sae proud?

They ca'd him, for a nickname, George the Gross ; for he was a very stout an' fat man. But the Regent wouldna let him aff wi' his high-handed ways, haudan' law and religion at defiance ; an' at last they came to open war.

Now the Head o' the Forbeses wanted to become a Protestant, but couldna for fear o' the Head o' the Gordons, who at that time had some power over him, and could force him to do anything he liked. So he forced him to gather his men and come out wi' him to fight against the Regent, but he did it wi' nae good will.

The armies met on the Hill o' Fare, and a terrible battle began. Some said the Queen hersel' was there sittin' on a big stane out ower a bit, an' lookin' on, but as to that I canna' say, for there are different accounts. Though the Gordons had the advantage o' the ground and fought desperately, the Forbeses held back ; and the Regent's dragoons galloped up the hill and got at them behind, and syne there was a terrible slaughter. Hundreds upon hundreds were killed, and at last the Gordons in spite o' themselves had to run. When the Regent's soldiers came to bury the slain, who should they find among the rest but George the Gross himsel' !

Weel, next day the Forbeses came an' made their submission to the Regent, but the Gordons wouldna, but cast a' the blame o' losing the battle on the Forbeses, and vowed revenge. They were proud, stubborn callants, the Gordons o' that day, and wouldna submit or hear reason. Syne there fell out sic a time o' spulzie an' rieht, burnan' houses an' castles, an' slaughteran' innocent wives an' bairns, as this country has never seen the like o' ; an' it would be hard to say whilk pairty was maist cruel ; for strife, as George Brown used to say, is like a muirburn, the mair it's thrashed the heicher it glows. But to my story.

It was about twenty years after the battle o' the Hill o' Fare that there was livan' in Greystone a weaver o' extraordinary size and strength, o' the name o' Fleeman, or MUCKLE FLEEMAN, as he was generally ca'd. But though he was so vera strong he wasna a troublesome man nor a bad neighbour; but for something that they had done to him, he had an ill will at the Gordons.

It happened one time he was down at Strathgirnock wi' a web he had been weavan' to the laird. The laird was, like himsel', a very strong man, an' o' a dark complexion. They ca'd him "Black Airtir Forbes." It was a fine summer morning, and ye wouldna hinder the twa to tak' a turn o' the sweertree on the loan just to see fa was strongest. The laird, strong though he was, ken't he had nae chance wi' Fleeman; but he thought it would be such a fine joke gin he could pull him up, fair or no fair; and so he had given directions to his servant to stan' behind him, an' put his feet on his coat-tails unken't to Fleeman, thinkan' that wi' this purchase he might maybe lift him. Fleeman hardly ken't his ain strength; an' at the sweertree he had never fa'en in wi' onybody that he couldna lift wi' a' ease. So he tried the laird wi' a canny pull first; but the laird wouldna jee. Syne he gave a stronger pull; but no, the laird wouldna rise, though the man that was standin' behind him was near thrown aff his legs. Fleeman now got angry at his failures, an' puttan' forth a' his strength, gave a tremendous pull. Up jumped the laird as gin he had been a feather, but left his coat tails on the green.

"Well, well," says he, lookan' round wi' astonishment, "you may have established yourself for a good hand at the sweertree, Fleeman, but you have lost all your credit for a weaver. Look at that rotten trash that couldna stand a pull of an honest man. If ye don't make better claith than that,

I doubt I'll need to give my trade to Johnny Gordon o' Scurrystane."

The laird ken't fine that Fleeman had a particular and long-standin' grudge at Scurrystane.

"Fa?" says Fleeman, "wee Johnnie, the laird o' Knoc's weaver? I hope I'll never live to see the day that the laird o' Strathgirnock will be clad in onything that's come through the hands o' ony Gordon o' them, mair especially o' sic a feckless bodie as Johnnie."

"Ye'll live lang if ye do, Fleeman, my man," said the laird to himsel'; for he had that very day had a quarrel wi' Gordon o' the Knoc about a brig ower the Girnock, and he wished to stir up Fleeman's wrath against the Gordons, as he thought it no unlikely that he might soon need his help.

Harry Gordon o' the Knoc and Forbes o' Strathgirnock had always been bad neighbours, baith on account o' the strife between their clans, and o' private quarrels o' their ain; an' this business o' the brig made them nae better. Forbes wanted the brig for the convenience o' gettan' to his moss; and Gordon wanted him cut out o' the moss, an' wouldna let him put up the brig, as an end o't would be on his land.

Just the day Fleeman was down wi' the web the twa lairds had some angry words about it, and Forbes tell't Gordon he would put it up, an' haud it up in spite o' him. Weel, some days after, he gathered his folk, an' they cut down big trees an' made a brig o' logs; but next night Gordon's folk threw it a' down the burn. Some while after this the lairds met in the moss, an' there was like to be a blue hour between them. Forbes accused the Gordons o' takan' advantage o' the nicht for their cowardly wark.

"To make amends for that," says Gordon, "next time ye try on a brig, ye can take advantage o' the nicht time, and, man for man, next day we'll send it after your ither ane."

"I take the challenge," says Forbes, and more than that, with the help of one other man, before I'm a day older, I'll put on a brig that there's nae four Gordons o' a' yer kith will be able to throw down."

"If ye do," says Gordon, "I'll let it stand."

Forbes had long had an eye on a great flag o' a stane on Craigphie, and thought it would make an unmoveable brig, if it could only be got to the burn and set up.

Well, away he went to see if he could get Muckle Fleeman to help him. The canny weaver wasna easy got to try ony ploy but the sweetree ; but Forbes got about him.

"D' ye ken," says he, "what Knoc has cast in my teeth, Fleeman?"

"No," says Fleeman, "it would be ill to ken what lees a Gordon wouldna make up. What did he say?"

"Weel, he said that we twa wouldna put up a brig on the Girnock before morning that Johnnie o' Scurrystane wi' ither three sic like wouldna pu' down before breakfast time next morning."

"He surely didna say that, did he?" asked Fleeman.

"Upon my word, he did, Fleeman," answered the laird.

"The vratch," said Fleeman, an' said nae mair, but buckled on his plaid (for he never went from home without his plaid, wet day or dry, cauld or warm, summer or winter) and followed the laird.

Before the sun keekit ower Craigphie, the Girnock was runnan' below the stane. At the appointed time the four strongest men in a' Glenmuick appeared wi' Knoc at their head, besides a lot mair to see fair play, and Scurrystane among the rest, but in spite o' a' they could do, they couldna mudge the brig. There it remained till the great flood o' the year '99 took it out o' sight.

You may be sure the Gordons were angry, and there was

like to be a ply between them an' the Forbeses. It was noticeable that Scurrystane keepit weel out o' the way, an' as muckle need had, for by Fleeman's looks it was thought that, if he could hae gotten a hold o' him, he wouldna hae left a thrum o' him thegither. However, Knoc said he wouldna brak his word, and there was nae scaith done that day.

But though they parted without blows, the Gordons werena likely to be quiet beneath the affront that had been put upon them. It made matters worse when sometime after Gordon poinded some stirks belongan' to Forbes that had gone across the march, an' gae him insultan' language when he came to relieve them. Forbes got wild, threw Knoc on his back i' the midden, and took awa' the stirks without askan' leave.

This couldna be let pass. The Gordons gathered, an' in ae night cleaned Strathgirnock o' every cattle beast in't. Forbes an' twa or three o' his tenants went to Knoc to see if they could quietly make up matters, an' get back their beasts. But no. Knoc had his folk out to guard the fauld, an' he was unco croose.

"There's yer stirks, Forbes," says he, "let's see if you an' your Strathgirnock folk, even wi' the muckle weaver o' Greystane at your back, will be able to take them away now."

Forbes couldna help himself. He an' his tenants were herriet, an' a dowie man was he, for he saw that he could get nae redress, as he had been the first himself to try the strong hand. They consulted together, but saw no way o' richtan' themselves, for they weel kent that the Gordons, when they got the grip, would keep the grip.

Muckle Fleeman heard what had happened to the laird, an' down he comes fully armed for whatever might be ado.

Forbes was glad to see him, for his counsel was sometimes as good as his strength. Fleeman was for forcan' the fauld directly, an' takan' away the stirks by main strength, but the laird wouldna hear o't.

"There's been enough of bad blood raised already," says he, "and I'm some in the faut myself. I shouldna hae been sae rash. We'll wait a day or two before we draw the sword."

"By that time," says Fleeman, "I shouldna wonder gin ye'll hae nae cattle tae recover; but far be it f'ae me to advise the spillan' o' human bleed."

"Weel, weel, Fleeman," says the laird, "come ye back on the third day, an' if nae better can be, I'll get ready."

It was dark before Fleeman left Strathgirnock. Though he usually came an' went by the north side o' the Dee, crossing at the islands o' Balchailach, this time being in gloomy spirits he took the path up the Craiguise as being the shortest, scheman' as he gaed along what could be done, an' seean' nae way for the laird out o' his difficulty but by handy nicht.

When he was about half gate up the wood he had got some plan in his head, an' sat down on a stock wi' his back till a tree to think about it. He was sae muckle teen up wi' his ain thoughts that he didna notice twa men that had come up the path till they were within a few yards of him. Syne they turned aff the path, an' stood there whisperan' to ane anither.

"Ye're nae about muckle good at ony rate," thinks he, "howsomever I'se watch ye."

"What can be keepan' Rory?" says the ane to the ither. "He was to have been here before this time." And then they fell a whisperan' again.

By an bye a third man comes.

"Weel met," says he, "we've a grand chance. The cattle o' Strathgirnock 's i' the fauld o' the Knoc, an' Black

Airter's sulky about it, an' we'll get nae disturbance f'ae him ; an' the Gordons are herdan' the fauld, so we can lift wi' a' freedom. We'll be through the Dee, an' past Rineaton afore day-light, an' next morning we'll leave Inverey's three coos at the Linn, an' then we can gae up the Geldie at a' leisure. But there's nae time to lose just now."

When they had fairly gone, Fleeman started to his feet, lifted his braid bonnet, gae his head a scratch where it wisna youkie, an' says he to himsel'—

"Noo, fa would hae thought that ever Fleeman Mor would hae wished good luck to Lochaber thieves? But it'll gang sair against me gin ever the beasts get the length o' Lochaber, or Inverey either, but I'm nae sae sair against their leavan' Glenmuick. An' noo I've nae mair time to lose than ye hae, my lads. We'll see fa'll be at Rineaton first."

Fleeman had a cousin at Rineaton near as strong as himsel' ; and straight to him he goes, and tells him what he had heard about the cattle-lifting, an' the twa made ready to attack the cateran as they were passing, an' tak' the cattle f'ae them. It was likely they would pass through Rineaton's land, an' that would gie them a richt to seize the drove if they could, and keep possession till relieved by the owners on paying damages and expenses.

"It doesna matter," replied Fleeman to his friend's doubts about the legality o' takan' the animals gin they didna trespass, "it doesna matter. Fa's tae ken? It's my thought they'll be on your land before onybody i' the glen is up to see fa pat them there."

They accordingly drove out to the hillside a bit stirkie tae gie signal, in case they should pass before it was clear ; for the beastie, haean' nae company o' its ain, would low an' mak' a great ado when it smelt ither cattle coman' on to the grun'. Syne they planted themselves in a hole near the auld

drove road, where they used to hide when they were watchan' the tod.

It was just gettan' day-licht, an' Fleeman was awfu' impatient that they werena coman', an' beginnan' to doubt that the lifting must hae miscarried, when his eye caught something movan' on the hillside atween him an' the kythan' sky. It was mair like a beast than a body.

After watchan' its prowlan' motions for a little, he whispers to his friend, "Let's keep close, I see the spy. We'll let him past if he'll go; and then we'll hae ane less to deal wi' when the cattle comes up."

He was coman' straight where they were, and was amaisht sure to see them. This was like to be very awkward, as the cattle might be a good bit behind, an' if he saw them he would be back like a hound an' gie the alarm, and then the twa might be taen for the lifters themselves if they were seen drivan' the beasts f'ae a distance.

When Fleeman was gettan' very uneasy at the approach o' the red headed bodie, the stirkie gae a sort o' a low. Away went Rory—for it was nae ither—to drive the beastie on afore him till he got past the touns, meanan' then to let it in wi' the rest. This took him awa' f'ae the hidan' place, an' just as he went out o' sicht roun' ae side o' the hill, the head o' the drove cam' in sight at the ither—twenty brave coos an' ousen; but instead o' twa there was four men drivan'.

Fleeman's friend was for lettan' them pass, sayan' it would cost somebody's life afore that cut-throat thieves would let go their haud o' sic a booty.

"Ye'll lose yer stirkie," says Fleeman, "gin we let them awa'."

"Oh, nae matter," says he, "I'd rather that than hae to tak' a man's life."

"Weel, weel," says Fleeman, "we canna help it noo."

They dinna seem as gin they were ga'an to pass very near, so we may just lie still and see what like they are."

But they did come near, an' when they were just ga'an to pass, Fleeman jumps out, catches a haud o' twa o' them afore they kent, threw them on the grun' ane abeen the ither, an' with his drawn sword prepared to defend himsel' f'ae the ither twa. But he had nae need. One o' them was on the grun' already, but the ither was aiman' an arrow at his friend."

"Hold!" roars Fleeman. "If you shoot that arrow, off comes the heads o' these twa men the next moment."

When he heard that there was a chance o' their heads no coman' aff onyway, he let down his bow, an' says the impudent rascal,

"Weel, shentlemans, if tis ish to pe a fair caption, an' nae peagles wark, I'll submit."

"It's no beagles wark," says Fleeman, "but afore ye leave this spot ye must tell me ae thing. Does Inverey ken onything o' this job?"

They all denied.

"Now, ye lying scoundrels," says he, "don't I know that he was to get three cows out o' that drove? And don't you know that if I were going to send word to Donald Farquharson, Inverey's head an' yours would be higher than ye want them before ye were two days older."

This speech had an astonishing effect.

"If the shentlemans would promise no to tell the Baillie Mor, nainsels would never never come back nor let ithers come."

"Ye promise, do ye?" says Fleeman. "Then ye'll gang past Inverey—ye can gie him yer ain story o' how ye lost the cattle—but tell him that, though he's safe this time, he'll better look after himsel'. Put back the stirkie that Rory's

drivan' awa', and see that ye be past Inverey before I hae word at the Castleton."

"The shentlemans is ower goot," said the kern, an' aff they ran.

Fleeman and his friend secured the cattle at Rineaton, an' then he set out for the Castleton to get a warrant f'ae the baillie to hold them.

Donald Farquharson heard his version o' the story about the capture, Fleeman takan' care to tell him that the kern were makan' aff wi' a stirkie f'ae Rineaton as well.

"Where do ye think the cattle have come from?" says the baillie.

"Couldna say: there's big stirks and weighty coos amang them," answered Fleeman.

"They'll be f'ae Cromar likely," says the baillie. "I'll give ye warrant, Fleeman, an' see that ye make them pay well for redemption."

Fleeman thought he had managed, for he kent fine that if the baillie had thought that the beasts belonged to the Gordons, he would neither hae given him a warrant or ony sic advice.

When he was coman' out at the door the baillie taks him by the sleeve, an' says he confidentially, "Do ye think, Fleeman, Inverey's hands are in this job?"

"Couldna say," says Fleeman.

"If ye could make out to me that Inverey shares the spoil, I would give you as good a cow's among them."

"If they come back again we'll try an' catch some o' them an' see," says Fleeman.

"Do so, do so," says the baillie. "Good day to you, Fleeman, and good speed to you next time."

"There was a great stir in Glenmuick that morning. The cry got up that the cateran had been down an' harriet

the country. There was rinnan' here an' rinnan' there to get on the track. At last word brak out that the folk o' Rineaton had fa'an in wi' the cateran an' captured the cattle. As many as twenty tenants f'ae Glenmuick were at Rineaton before night to claim their beasts—some, they say, that had lost nane. But Fleeman wouldna let a single beast go till he got satisfaction.

"I maun see Henry Gordon o' the Knoc before ye get ae hoof f'ae this," says he.

Gordon came next day, and Fleeman told him that he had the baillie's warrant for keepan' the beasts, and that he would gie them back only on ae condition, and that was that he would gie the folk o' Strathgirnock back theirs. The laird was awfu' unwillan', but he saw there was nae help, and at last he agreed, and Forbes an' his tenants got back their beasts.

After this there was a sort o' peace between the lairds for twa or three years, and then came the year o' the great spulzie (1592). Ah! mony a story had George Brown about that year.

Down they came, hundreds o' Mackintoshes, Mackenzies, an' Camerons, wi' Lamont o' Inverey, an' ithers f'ae Braemar. They surrounded Abergeldie, but couldna' get entrance there; then down past Strathgirnock an' to Glenmuick; an' they nearly murdered every Gordon i' the country—Braichley, Toldhu, and Knoc, among the rest.* Strathgirnock was f'ae

* In the "Deeside Guide," a holiday effusion of Dr. Joseph Robertson, the ballad of the "Barrone o' Brackley" is supposed to refer to this massacre of the Gordons by the clan Chattan, whereas in reality it relates to a *creach* by Farquharson of Inverey, about a century after the year of the great spulzie. The Inverey who joined the clan Chattan, tradition says, was a Lamont. He was certainly not a Farquharson. The first Farquharson of Inverey was James, fourth son of Donald, the Baillie Mor, who died about this time (1592).

From the name of the founder of the family, the Farquharsons of

hame, but they didna spulzie his land, and it was thought that he ken't mair about it than he should hae ken't.

The *creach* was hardly past, when up got the Gordons o' Cabrach (Auchindown), an' Donald Farquharson, an' his folk in Braemar, to revenge the murder o' their clansmen, an' a bloody revenge they took. Black Airtter hadna come hame (he couldna venture) ; but they killed his servants, an' burnt

Inverey, according to a custom very prevalent among Highland clans, were distinguished from other branches by the patronymic of MacHamish—or sons of James. Thus William, the son and successor of the founder, was styled by way of pre-eminence “The MacHamish Farquharson,” and William's son, John, who did commit the slaughter recorded in the ballad, was fond of being addressed by the same title. But he was a man of many titles. Being of a dark complexion, and having held a command under Dundee, he often went by the name of the “Black Colonel” ; and in the neighbouring Lowlands, where he was but too well known as a severe scourge, from his exactions of black mail and other oppressions he was styled “the lang-leggit Highlander,” and still more frequently “Logie.”

Between him and Sir William Forbes of Craigievar there was a deadly feud. Leaders of opposite political parties, when that meant mortal strife, Inverey took every opportunity to make raids on Craigievar's territory—attacks which were keenly repelled, and sometimes even avenged. In one of their encounters, Forbes having had the worst, was obliged to consult his safety by flight, and hence arose the jeering rhyme,

“ Run, Willie, run,
Run, or ye'll be taen,
For the lang-leggit Highlander
Is coman' ower Culbleen.”

In another affair of arms Inverey's party were scattered, and himself only escaped capture by seeking concealment in a kiln-logie, which ignoble retreat procured for him the above mentioned nickname of “Logie,” and gave rise to the counter-blast—

“ Run, Logie, run,
Run, or ye'll be taen ;
An' there's nae kye-lifting
In the jail o' Aberdeen.”

the house o' Strathgirnock, and Muckle Fleeman himsel' had to go into hiding, though he had nae mair hand in 't, or wyte o't than you or me. The Baillie Mor hanged Inverey an' his sons on a tree before their ain door, and got his land for his trouble. Their peer auld mither was put out o' her senses by this cruelty, and in her raving madness she prophesied that the tree would be green when his tribe would be as landless and sonless as he had made her. Gin this come true or no, I canna say, for trees last lang, an' the auld Farquharsons are wearan' fast awa'. For as mony lairds o' them as there was a hundred years, an' less, ago, there's nane now has a foot o' land abeen Culbleen, save Monaltrie an' Invercauld; and Monaltrie has nae bairns, and the auld laird o' Invercauld saw a' his bonnie family dead before him, 'cept his youngest lassie, that's now the lady o' a' his land.* But to my story.

Things had quieted down a little before next year, an' Forbes had creepit back, though he wasna seen openly, an' Fleeman had begun his weaving again.

Months passed, and Forbes was lodging, when he thought it safe to be in a house, wi' a tenant o' his ain at Loinchork. But the Gordons were only waitan' their opportunity. A plot was formed to capture Forbes and Fleeman, alive or dead. Their plan was to fall upon them in the night time unawares and catch them in their beds.

Weel, ae day the laird had been watched an' seen about Loinchork in the gloamin'. That night the wife couldna get sleep, an' sat up wi' a bit lassie, a dochter o' her ain, at the fireside. When it was gettan' late, she says to the lassie—

“Run out, Janettie, to the well for some water to be ready i' the morning, an' syne we'll gang to our beds.”

The lassie came back in a fricht without the water, an' says she, “Mither, I'm feert.”

* For the Clan Farquharson, *see* Note IX.

"Fat makes ye feert, bairn?" says her mither.

"Fan I was ga'an to the well," says she, "I heard some cursmushling at the back o' the dyke; an' fan I steed an' harken't, there was folk speakan'."

"If there was, my bairn, it's time for somebody to be up an' awa'; but come out wi' me; maybe we'll fin' out what they're after."

When they got to the place where the lassie heard the speakan', they harken't for a wee, an' syne heard ae man behind the dyke sayan' to anither, "By this time the other lot will be settan' out for Greystone; we'll better get through wi' this job as fast 's we can."

The gudewife waited to hear nae mair; but rushan' to where Forbes was sleepin' cries to him, "Run, laird, run; save your ain life an' Fleeman's. Out at the window, the Gordons are at the door!"

He started up, an' without waitan' to put on his claes jumped out at the window, down the glen, an' through the water, though it came up to his middle, an' burst into Fleeman's house in Greystone in less than half an hour.

Fleeman was nearly dumfounder'd to see the laird coman' this way, mair than half naked, at the dead hour o' midnight, an' in a terrible excited state.

"They'll be here," says Forbes, "in less than half an hour, an' what's to be done?"

"Fa'll be here?" asks Fleeman.

"The Gordons," says the laird; an' syne he tells him what had been overheard by the wife o' Loinchork.

"To arms!" cries Fleeman, and jumped out o' his warm bed. He soon put on his grey plaiding claes, an' as soon took down his sword fae the nail at the foot o' the bed, an' wi' it cut a half finished web out o' the loom, tied it about

the laird's shoulders, an' puttan' an auld Lochaber axe in his hand made ready to go out.

"Ye're nae wise enough," says the laird, "there'll be mair than a dozen o' them."

"Gin there were twa, Airtier, we'll go and face them," says he, an' wi' that he out an' down the road, and the laird close at his heels.

They didna speak a word for mair than a mile, but says the laird at last, "We're not unlikely to miss them if we go on this way."

"If we do, we'll not miss the castle o' the Knoc," says Fleeman.

Forbes saw at once that there would be nobody to defend the castle that night, and that there might be prisoners taen that the Gordons didna think o', an' if there were houses burnt, the castle itsel' might pay for 't. He was keen for this, and on they went till they were between Coilacreich an' Luimnaghuie. Here they noticed something coman' round the corner before them.

"We'll post ourselves at the top o' the brae here," says Fleeman, "an' wait till that comes up, whatever it is."

When they came near enough—for it was the Gordons—Fleeman jumped out f'ae the back o' the bank where he and the laird had hid themselves, ordered them to stand, and demanded to know what they meant by coming that way under cloud o' night into the country o' peaceable folk.

No Gordon could mistake the voice. Fearan' that they had fallen into an ambush, they drew back a little, and consulted together; and then sent Toldhu to speak to Fleeman.

Toldhu was a sensible man, an' kennan' that a saft answer turns away wrath, says he,

"Fie, fie, Fleeman, man! the laddies mean nae harm; they're only on a bit o' frolic.

“Frolic!” cried Forbes in scorn, “when the Gordons bandy together for frolic, it’s like to cost some one dear.”

“This nicht’s wark very nearly cost them dear,” put in Fleeman, “but I’m opposed to the sheddan’ o’ human bleed gin it can be helpit. Gae back, Toldhu, and tell them that I’m determined we shall not part this night without blood, unless they give their solemn oath that for a year f’ae this day we an’ ours shall not be molested by them or theirs. If in ten minutes they don’t do this, by him that begot me! there will be wild frolic to tell o’ in Glenmuick the morn.”

Toldhu managed the matter, an’ got the Gordons to consent. Indeed, they were glad that they were to get aff sae easily, an’ baith pairties swore on their naked dirks to be good neighbours for a year to come; an’ the Gordons took aff hame gey an’ crestfallen. But good came o’ this, an’ there was peace between the twa clans on Deeside for nae ae year but mony a year thereafter.

CHAPTER XIV

MUCKLE FLEEMAN

(concluded)



THOUGH muckle good came o' the paction between the Gordons and the laird o' Strathgirnock at Luimnaghuie, this wasna to be the end o' their strife, and the warst came hin'most.

Henry Gordon, the auld laird o' the Knoc, was killed, as I told ye, in the great raid o' the year 1592. Hae an' nae family, his next brother, Alister, that succeeded him, was a man i' the prime o' life, an' being o' a peaceable disposition, he an' Black Airtter got on nae that ill for lang.

Knoc had a large family, maistly sons, and Strathgirnock had but an only dochter, an' what was mair natural, as they were neighbours' bairns, than that ane o' the lads o' the Knoc should fa' in love wi' the young lady o' Strathgirnock?

They had a' their courtan' ado unken't to her father; an' as George Brown used to say, it's nae aften that muckle good comes o' that way o't. They baith kent weel that he would never allow them to marry gin he could help it, an' that he would get into a terrible rage gin he thought they were makan' up for ony sic thing.

Had it been the young laird, there wouldna hae been sae muckle fear but that matters might maybe hae been settled between them ; but it was only the third son, an' that would never do. Ower an' forby that, Forbes had intended that his dochter should marry her ain cousin, young Skellater, an' so keep the property in the family. But young folk's love, as George Brown used to say, is unco wilfu', an' winna bend to auld folk's schemes. Though young Skellater came sometimes to see her, she never liket him, an' would marry him upon no account. She hadna keepit this ony ways hidden f'ae her father, and he was very vexed ; but he wouldna cross his lassie, as he ca'd her, for he was very, very fond o' her. But had he ken't that it was Francie Gordon that had wiled awa' his bairnie's heart he wouldna hae ta'en the matter sae calmly.

It was the auld, auld story o' secret, forbidden love ower again ; an' a time came when it couldna be concealed. The young folks got the Baron o' Braichley, a gentleman o' discretion that everybody respeckit, to tak' in hand to brak' the news to her father.

Forbes at first got pale as death ; but at last says he, "I'll no hinder them, Braichley. They can take their way, and I'll take mine."

The baron didna like his manner ava'. It was unnatural. He expected he would hae flown into a rage, an' fa'en out on the whole tribe o' the Gordons ; an' he would hae liket that better. It would soon hae blown past, an' then his "ain lassie" would hae been his ain lassie still. But he got into no rage, though he was a passionate man, made no answer, but, as gin he were speaking to himsel', just said, "They can take their way, I'll take mine."

The young folks didna see ony o' the danger in this that the Baron saw, an' were only glad that he hadna flown into a

bigger rage ; an' so the wedding was arranged to take place in a fortnight.

They had a queer custom then o' days : the bridegroom gaed a thiggan' among the friends, an' got presents o' corn an' ither gear in token o' their well wishes. It wouldna maybe hae been thought quite becoman' in the young laird to hae done this, for the meaning o't was to set him up in the warl' ; but for the ither sons it was the common fashion.

Weel, Francie Gordon would be just like his neighbours, an' so out he sets wi' a servant an' a horse an' creels ; an' he would make no exception o' his intended gude-father, thinkan' that maybe in this way he might manage to get a little into his favour. But he had sair mista'en the temper o' the laird. Forbes looked upon it as an intended insult to him an' his dochter ; an' happenan' to be walkan' about when the callant came, he took up his sword to drive him awa' like a hungry dog, as he said. But in drawan' a blow at him, the scabbard flew aff, an' Francie Gordon's head row'd awa' like a ba' on the loan.

The laird didna appear to be much astonished or very sorry at the accident, gin it was an accident, for all he said was—

“It's a sad business this. Howsomever, what's ance done canna be mendit. If the Gordons winna get a bridal, they'll get a burial, an' that 's aye something.”

It was nae doubt an awfu' savage deed o' blood, an' might weel be expected to be as savagely avenged ; but for some reason or other the friends o' the slaughtered youth thought it best to have Forbes first condemned at a head court to be holden at the Foot o' Gairn. Before the court he was summoned to appear ; but expecting little justice at their hands, instead of doing so, he made aff to advise wi' his auld friend, Fleeman Mor.

It was thought very unlucky for a man under guilt or even charge of murder to enter another man's house. So when the laird came to Greystone, he wouldna come in for a' that Fleeman could entreat him. The weaver had not yet heard what had happened at Strathgirnock, but dreaded that there was something very far wrang wi' the laird when he wouldna come in, an' says he—

“Gin ye winna come in, laird, ye'll surely tak' a drink o' ale at the door.”

This was to be a token to him that, whatever was the matter, he would stand by him, and not betray him. The laird therefore accepted the offer, saying—

“I will do so, weaver; I'm not out of the need of a drink of your ale the day.”

“And ye're very welcome to it,” says Fleeman, “it would be ill my pairt nae to stand by ye, whatever be ado.”

“Weel, it's this,” says the laird, after he had ta'en a good drink. “Ye've heard nae doubt of the wedding that we were to have had, and wondered muckle at it, I daresay. But I can tell ye there'll be no wedding o't. The chiel had the impudence to come to me when he was out at his bridal thigging, and I drew a blow at him with my sword in the scabbard, and the Gordons are vowing vengeance.”

“I dinna see,” says the weaver, “that they're needan' to mak' sae muckle ado for a blow wi' the scabbard.”

“Aye, aye, Fleeman,” says the laird, “but the scabbard flew off.”

“Ochone, ochone, laird,” cried Fleeman; an' looked on the ground a good while maist bewildered. Then turning to Forbes says he—

“What do you think the Gordons will do?”

“As to that, weaver,” answers the laird, “ye may be sure they'll do their worst. If I ken't as well what I should do

myself, I would be much relieved in my mind. They are to meet to-day at a head court at the Foot o' Gairn to take counsel; and if they could get a hold of me I put no doubt but they would take a short way of clearing lang scores between us. But what do you think should be done? Should I appear or not?"

"I think you should," said Fleeman; "to be awa' would be to tak' on guilt; but nae alane. I'll buckle on my graith, an' go down wi' ye to see gin a quiet settlement can be made."

When the twa made their appearance on the brae-head above the haugh where the Gordons were met, some of them proposed that they should at once seize them, an' execute justice on Forbes for the slaughter of their kinsman. But an auld wise sennachie among them steps forward, an' says he—

"I've nae doubt, men, but ye could do what ye say, but ye behove to consider that they are prepared to defend themselves to the very last if we try force on them, or they wouldna be here to-day; and gin we try to take them by the strong hand it will cost the life o' mair than ane o' ourselves, and so make matters waur than they are. They're baith men o' no ordinar' strength an' in desperate case, an' my counsel is that we should not attempt violence on this occasion."

The discretion of this advice was soon seen, when Forbes sent a message that he was willing, wi' Fleeman as his second, to have the case decided by combat, an' for this purpose challenged ony twa Gordons that micht choose to enter the lists with him. There was nae twa that did choose; and so the Gordons returned home without doing anything. Forbes and Fleeman likewise returned home, and this was the last time they were ever in ither's company.

Fleeman died in peace in his ain house in Greystone just

as the troubles o' the civil war were breaking out ; and didna live to see the evil that befell his friend, the laird, which, as George Brown said, would hae brought down his grey hairs wi' sorrow to the grave.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRAGIC END OF FORBES OF STRATHGIRNOCK



ALTHOUGH the story of Muckle Fleeman has now been told, his doughty deeds, only a few of which have been here recorded, so connected him with the family of Strathgirnock, that it would be unwarrantable to break off the narrative at this point, more especially as George Brown was not in the way of doing so, and as his account of the fate of Forbes differs in several important particulars from that given in Grant's "Legends of the Braes o' Mar," and more recently in Taylor's "Braemar Highlands."

Aweel, ye see, continues the authority on which the above narrative rests, the times were gettan' very troublous. Broken men were burnan' houses, an' slaughteran' people, an' the law couldna, an' their chiefs wouldna, put a stop to them. The laird had to flee f'ae Strathgirnock, an' took up arms under his chief, the Lord Forbes, who was gatheran' his men to defend the lives an' properties o' the clan f'ae the raids o' the Gordons.

A demand was made that Strathgirnock should be brought to justice ; but Lord Forbes wouldna gie him up, an'

as good reason had, for there were as black crimes against many o' the Gordons that they would gie nae satisfaction for.

Weel, things came to a head, an' there was a battle between them ower about Donside. The Glenmuick men were there, an' like the Syrians to Ahab at the battle of Ramoth Gilead, they held at Strathgirnock an' naebody else; and at last he was ta'en prisoner. It's no unlikely they would soon hae made an end o' him hadna Lord Forbes's brother sent word to the laird o' Auchindoun that, gin Strathgirnock were slain, he would richt himsel' by takan' the life o' the young laird o' Newton, that was then a prisoner in his hands.

This laird o' Auchindoun was a great man among the Gordons, nearly related to their chief, and a mighty man o' valour.

When young Knoc was cryan' loud for the blood o' Forbes, says he to him—

“Alister Og, Strathgirnock's case must be decided at head quarters. Go ye away home, my man; and tell your father that, if he gets the lands of Strathgirnock, it'll answer him better than the blood o' Black Arthur, and he can hardly expect both.”

Auchindoun weel kent that auld Knoc wanted naething but this out o' the marriage o' his son wi' Forbes's dochter; an' he kent likewise that this way o't would please the young laird better than the other, as that might hae put the land past himsel'. So hame he goes rejoicing that he had got, as he thocht, a good richt to the property o' Strathgirnock.

But there was ane at Strathgirnock as soon 's him—Wattie M'Rory, Black Airtter's henchman—that took possession o' the house o' Strathgirnock, an' keepit it in spite o' the Gordons.

The laird was never brought to trial, but lay a prisoner in Auchindoun Castle for mair than a year. At the end o' that time there was some exchange o' prisoners, and he was released. Coman' to Deeside, the first news he got was that Knoc had taken possession o' his land, an' had put awa' some o' his auld tenants. So, to see how matters stood, he put on disguise, an' came ae evening to his ain house o' Strathgirnock seekan' lodgings as gin he had been a beggar man; an' fa should open the door to him but Wattie? Wattie kent him for a' his disguise, an' nearly gaed out o' his wits wi' joy to see him again.

"Ah me! laird," says he; "changed times here noo! Ochone, ochone! Foo did ye pairt wi' your lan'? Oh, that my auld een had been i' the mools afore this day! The bonnie Strath i' the grip o' yer fae! your auld friens oppressed an' driven out o' house an' hauld, an' the richtfu' heir seekan' quarters wi' the wallets on his back at the house far ance he was the braw, braw laird! Ochone, ochone!" An' he danced about him like a dog about his maister fan he comes hame after bean' lang awa'.

"Never mind, Wattie," says the laird, "it's not so bad as it might have been. I thought I might perhaps not have got lodgings in my own house, but it seems I may. How long I shall want them I shall tell you to-morrow; and as for the wallets, I'm nae sae duddy's I look," says he smilan'.

Wi' that he cast aff the wallets an' his gaberloonzie cloak, an' Wattie saw that he had his claymore, skeandhu, an' a' his graith ready.

"I'm your laird again, you see, Wattie; and though I'm now getting old, this hand has something to do yet before it stiffens into clay."

As he said this he drew his sword, held it up at arms length, turned it about an' look'd at it, syne put it to his lips

an' kissed it, an' then put it back into its sheath again.* Wattie looked on wi' admiration, an' thought it was unco grand behaviour o' the laird. He kent weel the meaning o' kissing the sword—he kent that he that did it had sworn in his heart to trust only to it for his life an' richts, and he thought that very brave o' the laird.

Next day the twa went up the glen, the laird intendan' to call on his favourite tenant at Loinchork. But when they came in sight o' the town Wattie tell't him that the auld tenant had been driven awa', an' was ower livan' wi' Fleeman's folk at Greystone; an' what should he see wi' his ain een but the laird o' Knoc's seven sons castan' divots on his lan'?

"My hour is come," says he, an' then lookan' to the ground as gin he had forgot something an' was trying to mind what it was, "but there's something to be done first," he adds.

Wi' that he placed seven stanes, ane abeen the ither, at the burnie side, an' then says he to M'Rory—

"Do you remember what took place last night, Wattie?"

"Brawly that," says Wattie, lookan' at the sword that was hangan' at the laird's side.

"Well, then," says the laird, "I'm to take a sleep here. You keep watch; and the moment these stones fall, you waken me. Wattie, I've kissed my sword!"

"I understand," says Wattie, "you needna fear me."

"I can trust you, Wattie," says the laird, coveran' his head in his plaid, and lying down amang the heather.

* This was generally the manner of taking the vow of a broken man—one who held at nought all authority whether of chief or law, relied solely on his own sword to redress his grievances and avenge his wrongs, a follower in theory and practice of

"The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

Noo, thinks Wattie to himsel', gin I didna do his biddin', I put nae doubt he would tak' aff my head the next moment, for as lang's I hae been wi' him. He's awfu' changed since this troubles brak out, but it's like to be a lang watch. What could mak' the stanes fa'?

As these thoughts were in his head, there came an eddy of wind up the glen, an' down fell the uppermost stane.

"Gude preserve 's a'," says Wattie, "this is nae canny." Syne there came another puff, an' down fell the next stane. And before the laird had been half an hour sleepin', they were a' down. Then Wattie instantly wakened him.

Jumpan' to his feet, the first thing he did was to look at the stanes, an' seean' that they were a' lyan' in the direction o' the men that were castan' the divots, "It's well," says he, "we'll go and see what the Gordons are doing."

They were close upon them before they noticed.

"Hear me, ye thieves and spoilers!" roared Forbes, "you are caught in the very act. Within this very hour, the ground you are riving has cried for your blood; and it shall have it. Prepare to meet your doom."

Then drawing his sword, he killed the whole seven, stuck their heads on the flauchter spades, and set them up in a row on the hillside.

"They wouldna want blood, Wattie," says he when the job was done, "but I'm thinkan' they've got enough of it now." Syne turnan' about he went to his ain house o' Strathgirnock as gin naething had happened.

It wasna lang after this when a servant came f'ae the Knoc wi' the young lads' dinner. How soon 's he saw the fearsome sight o' the heads set up on the flauchter spades, back he runs wi' a' speed to tell what had happened. The auld laird was sittan' on a step o' the stair, an' when he heard o' the slaughter o' his sons, he fell backwards like auld Eli, ower the railing an' brak his neck.

There was nae man i' the hale country sae proud o' his family as auld Knoc, an' nae man thought to be mair prosperous in his warldly affairs. His castle was the brawest an' strongest, less Abergeldie, o' ony gentleman's house abeen Culbleen. A man's riches then o' days was his family, an' nane could compare wi' Knoc in that respec'. But in ae waefu' day they a' fell before the avenger, root and branch, an' their seed has perished f'ae the earth. But it fared nae better wi' the destroyer.

Black Alister Gordon o' Abergeldie was the Baillie Mor o' Deeside. How soon 's he heard what Forbes had done, down comes he upon Strathgirnock wi' a band o' well armed men, surrounded the house, and called upon the laird to surrender. But he wouldna surrender, an' dared them to take him. Wi' that they fired shots into the house, and brak open the door. Forbes was just ga'an' to rush out upon them when a ball struck him in the breast, an' down he fell to the ground. Then they brak in upon him, an' hanged him an' his henchman, Wattie M'Rory, on the balks o' his ain house.

Thus ye see, as George Brown used to say, how true are our Saviour's words, that "all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

To recompense himsel' for his trouble, Abergeldie served himsel' heir to the lands o' Strathgirnock, an' came in to the lands o' the Knoc as nearest o' kin ; and baith properties hae been in the family aye since syne.

The house o' Strathgirnock was never afterwards inhabited. It stood at the foot o' Craighipie, an' George Brown used to tell that, when he was young, the *larach* (foundation) was quite distinct ; an' I mind mysel', when there was a clomp o' auld ash trees there that I put nae doubt were planted by Black Airter Forbes himsel'.

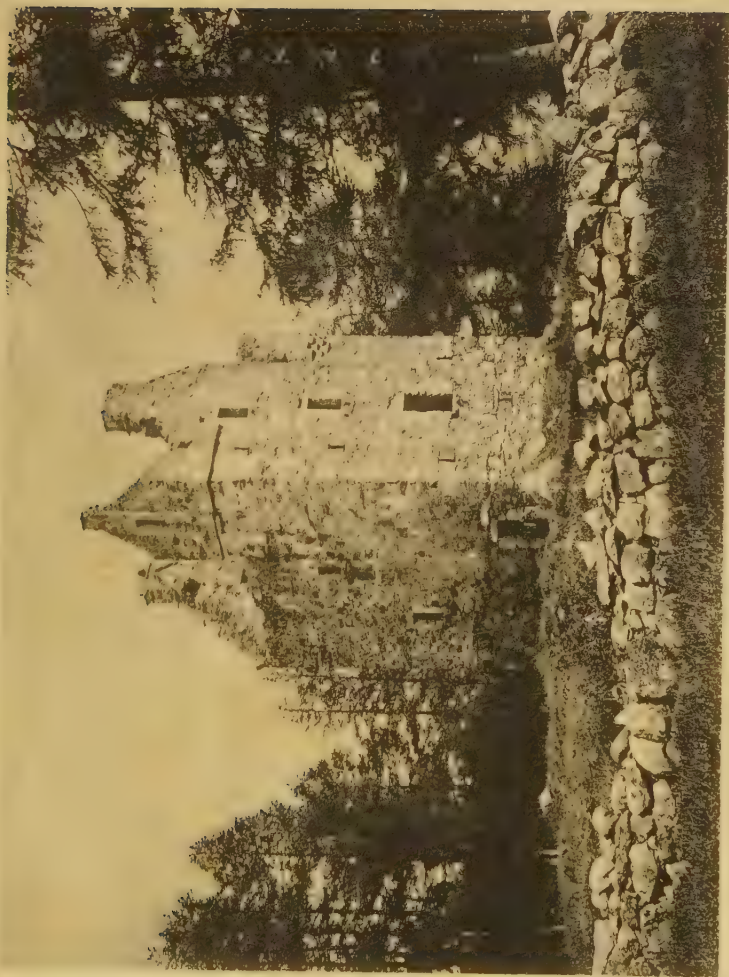
As to the Knoc, George Brown used to say that there was a bigging o' some kind there afore the days o' Wallace an' Bruce, an' that a family o' the name o' Durward lived in't. The tribe o' the Durwards was very strong at that time, an' had anither castle at Abergairn on the north side o' the Dee, an' he had heard it said that there was some kind o' underground passage between the twa. But George didna believe in the passage, but said that, in very ancient times most o' the large castles had underground chambers, an' passages, as ye may see yet at the auld castle o' Kindrochet in Braemar. But for passages miles lang, an' in below roaran' rivers, there was nae sic thing, but only imagined by folk that ken't nae better, an' when they got a hair would mak' a tether o't.

I've heard George say that the best account he ever got o' the Knoc was f'ae an auld man that lived in Loinmuie, whose grandfather had great routh o' auld warl' stories, an' was in the way o' tellan' them to this man when he was a laddie.

Weel, the history, as far 's I ever heard George tell't, was this—

Some kind o' a fort was built there by command o' James I., or James II., I couldna be sure which he said, but it was far back among the Jameses, an' was held by commission f'ae the King to check the depredations that were rife on Deeside at that time. The surrounding lands were given for behoof o' the garrison which was commanded sometimes by ae man, sometimes by anither, as was the King's will.

In the time o' James IV., the Gordons had risen to such power that they got the filling up o' a' posts o' that kind in this country. Aweel, the Earl o' Huntly, that was the King's gude-brother, appoints a son o' his ain to be commander o' the fort o' Knoc. But this son was killed alang wi' his



KNOCK CASTLE.

father, fighting against the English at the fatal battle o' Flodden.

Next, George the Gross succeeded, an' being High Chancellor to King James V., he grants a charter o' the lands of Knoc to a brother o' the laird o' Abergeldie, that was his ain cousin, an' so the property became his. This was the father o' the Henry Gordon that was murdered by the clan Chattan, an' o' his brother Alister that biggit the present castle, an' met his death as ye have heard. So ye see the Abergeldies an' them were very sib."

CHAPTER XVI

GEORGE BROWN

(resumed)



THE writer is sensible that the preceding stories occupy far too much space in this sketch of the life of George Brown, but he has found it impossible to abbreviate them farther without destroying their character as specimens of the traditional tales which that singular man had collected, and was in the habit of narrating to delighted audiences during the long winter evenings.

His fund of this kind of lore seemed inexhaustible. There was not within the district the ruins or site of an old church or chapel regarding which he had not gleaned some legend. The names of hills, glades, glens, corries, streams, and even pools and rapids in the river, had each its legend which accounted for its origin or related some circumstance connected with it.

It is a peculiarity of Highlanders—some ethnologists affirm of Celts universally—to attach a name to every locality, however small, that has anything distinctive about it. These names are mostly pictorial, or descriptive of physical features; but a large number are also traditional, or commemorative of some striking event.

This latter class, by each of which there hung a tale, formed as it were an index to the greater part of the legends of the district. Accounts of miracles, generally cases of exorcism of evil spirits, constituted a principal feature of the legends attached to ancient chapels, while ghost stories prevailed to a great extent among those relating to ruined churches, and narratives of strife and blood among those commemorated by the names of less sacred places. George himself did not share the superstitious notions of the ignorant around him, and seldom failed to point out what priestcraft had to do with originating and propagating a miraculous story or legend.

It was not, however, in local traditions alone that he was great. He was conversant with general history, and particularly with the history, civil and ecclesiastical, of his native country; and delighted much more to rehearse stories from this source than the wild and unauthenticated tales of tradition.

With his Bible, both in English and Gaelic, he was so familiar that he could repeat large portions of it from memory, and rarely could a text be quoted that he could not instantly refer to its chapter and verse. The use which his shrewd and acute mind enabled him to make of this knowledge, procured for him the respect and veneration of a wide circle.

Theological polemics were then the favourite subjects of discussion among the peasantry. The ignorance of the disputants, so far from imposing silence on them, only lent keenness to the arguments with which they supported their views; but their good sense led them very generally to constitute George sole arbiter of their differences on knotty points of doctrine and interpretations of obscure passages of Holy Writ, and from his decisions there seldom or never was

any appeal. It was therefore no unusual thing to find his house filled of an evening with controversialists who had come to have the matters in dispute between them adjusted. On these occasions George would take the judicial bench, and after hearing each party state his views, would lay down the law on the point with a clearness and gravity that never failed to command acquiescence.

The annual diet of catechising was, however, his great theological field day. When the one appointed for the district in which he lived was announced from the pulpit on the Sabbath preceding, the old people employed all their leisure hours during the interval in a careful perusal of the Shorter Catechism with the contents of which, as the text book, all were expected to be familiar. Punctual to the hour, the minister presented himself at the house appointed for the meeting, and having opened the diet with prayer, would request George to take a seat beside him. He then put a question from the catechism to each all round, till he came to George, when he would remark—

“I need not ask a question at you, George. I am well aware how familiar you are with the standards of our church. I shall therefore proceed to enquire what reason we can give for the hope that is in us.”

When in the course of the examination that followed any one stated a difficulty he had regarding a point of doctrine or passage of Scripture, or when an answer of doubtful orthodoxy was received to a query, the clergyman would turn to George and say—

“What is your opinion on that point, George?”

Thus appealed to, he would handle the question in a manner that always gave satisfaction to the minister, and raised himself greatly in the estimation of his fellows.

From the reputation which he thus acquired for learning and wisdom, other disputes than theological were not infrequently referred to him for settlement; and in his decisions he invariably sustained a character which he coveted even more than scholarly reputation—that of peace maker. He had the rare art of supporting his opinions with short sententious remarks that generally carried conviction of their wisdom. Many of these passed into proverbs, and are still occasionally quoted by the old people of the district.

There was, however, one man, though only one in the whole country, on whose erroneous theological opinions he could make no impression—this was Walter Stewart. Yet, strange to say, though their religious notions were wide as the poles asunder, the men themselves were staunch and bosom cronies. It will be better not to interrupt this notice of George Brown by any account of their intercourse, but to reserve it for a sketch of Walter, to be given anon.

Around George's hearth there was now springing up a blooming family of sons and daughters. The boys were in no way remarkable; but one at least of the girls—Barbara, or as she was generally called "Babby"—was almost as celebrated for her beauty as her father for his wisdom and knowledge. As she grew up to woman's estate, she attracted to the paternal fireside many a youth whose heart throbbed with a softer passion than a hankering after ancient lore or modern news. With sweet features and fair form, she was also gifted with captivating manners and sparkling wit. Nor was it a mere hamlet reputation her beauty had gained for her. Wherever she appeared she won both friends and admirers; so that before she was out of her teens she was universally acknowledged to be, and styled, "The Flower o' Deeside."

Babby Brown "had many hearts a-keeping;" and widely

envied was the youth for whom she was supposed to have any partiality. Nor were her admirers confined to her own station in society. It was well enough known that, among others of the better sort, an officer in His Majesty's Royal Militia was deeply smitten by her charms, and for long was most assiduous in his attentions to her; but both she and her father had the good sense to discourage his suit.

Although Babby was no flirt, yet she was so sprightly that the state of her own heart was for long either free, or very well concealed. At last, however, it did begin to be rumoured that there was a favoured one among her numerous wooers. This was Peter Frankie.* Peter was in all respects an eligible match, and, however many might be disappointed, few were surprised at the selection she had made. Though her senior by several years and a widower, he was still young. In personal appearance he was smart, neat, and active, dressed well, and in short was rather irresistible. Having been a favourite retainer of the Abergeldie family, he had been appointed to what was then considered one of the prize situations of the country—that of gamekeeper at Allt na Giuthsaich, now one of Her Majesty's favourite mountain lodges. Such was the man who had won the heart of the "Flower of Deeside," and on whom she was about to bestow her hand.

It is here necessary to interrupt this narrative a little in order to relate a bogle story, which will lead to its resumption again, with an account of a melancholy occurrence.

* Gael. Frangach (Frenchman). In a description of the Castle in one of the author's note-books, it is stated that there is a dark recess under the stair called Katie Frankie's Hole, in which a witch of the name was confined before being burnt on the top of Craignaban. She was a Frenchwoman.—D.

A BOGLE STORY AND A FATAL ACCIDENT.

The ghost or bogle story might have been omitted for any connection it has with this history ; but because it is a fair specimen of such tales, and will re-introduce the narrative in the words of a contemporary of the events, it may not be amiss to relate it.

“I’m no believer in ghosts an’ witches mysel’,” usually began the person on whose authority the following account rests, who was a man of strict veracity and by no means superstitious, and whose very words the writer believes he can now give, so often has he heard the tale, and so strong a hold did it take of his boyish mind—

“I’m no believer in ghosts and witchcraft and sic like things mysel’, but this that I am ga’an to tell you, I saw wi’ my ain een, though what it was I’ll no pretend to say.

“So far as I can remember, it was in the year ’23. In the go-hairst, when the black fish were coming on to the redds, I and a cousin took it into our heads to go down one evening to the Craiguise, to hole some fir to make blazes. I mind weel it was on a Monday night ; and down we went, and crossed over at the foot o’ Polslaig. We met wi’ some disturbance in the wood, and had to come back without our errand.

“As we were coming up the water side at the haughs o’ Easter Micras, we fell in wi’ an auld-fashioned ploo that the man had been fauchan’ wi’. We were feelish young men then, and we didna care muckle what we did gin we got fun, an’ ‘the mair mischief the better sport,’ as the saying is. But nae good ever comes o’ that. Howsomever, that’s the humour we were in that night ; and so we began to joke about the ploo, an’ at last took it up an’ threw it ower the bank, on to the *stanners* (river beach), thinkan’ it would be

sic a fine joke, as we would likely hear a story in a day or twa how that the kelpie had been tryan' to make aff wi' the ploo.

"We hadna come awa' mony hunder yards, when my cousin, he stops, and says he, 'What's that on the other side o' the water?'

"Now, if ye mind, there's a sheet o' backwater at the head o' Polslaig. The night wasna dark; the meen was like a quarter auld, but gey well on to the setting. Aweel, I looks across, an' sees something white swimman' round and round about at the upper end o' the backwater, an' says I—

"'That's surely ane o' the Abergeldie deuks that is come down the water an' tint the rest.'

"'Whatever it is,' says he, 'let's hae a shot at it wi' a stane.'

"Wi' that we fell to; but still it never minded the stanes, but kept swimman' round an' round as before. This made us a' the mair determined to put it out there, but it never minded us, only it began to look bigger an' bigger.

"'It's nae a deuk,' says I, 'its ane o' the Abergeldie geese, an' I think we should let it alane, for we may chance to strike it, an' kill 't.'

"'Whatever it is,' says he, 'we should be able to make it shift its quarters.'

"After a little it did shift, and began to leave the backwater, and come across the stanners, makan' straight for where we were. I mind we thought that queer, but we made sure o' hittan' 't now, as it looked as big as a sheep. But no. On it came, and before it got to the water edge it was black instead o' white.

"'Whatever it is,' says my cousin, 'I'll gie 't a sair hide gin it comes farther.'

"Wi' that he sets about gatheran' some stanes to throw at

it. I threw ane or twa I had in my hand, and wondered that I didna hit it, and syne I fell a gatheran' stanes tee that we might baith charge it thegither. When I had gathered half a dozen good bumblacks out o' the land, I lookit round, but my cousin wasna there. He had taen to his heels, and was makan' for the road as fast as his legs could carry him. I gave a look at the thing, and there it was in the middle o' the water, as big 's a calf.

"You may be sure, when ance we set out we werena lang on the road, and we had run near a mile before either o' 's spak a word. At last, says I to him—

" 'What gart ye run aff yon way, man?'

" 'Run!' says he; 'it was time to run! didna ye see the horns on 't an' the licht in its een?'

"Now, I saw nae sic thing, but at the same time I did think it was unearthly like.

"Weel, we made straight for George Brown's; and we didna meet nor see a body till we met Babby Brown at her ain father's door. We didna wait to speak lang to her, but gaed in and told auld George a' that had happened.

" 'Weel, lads,' says he, 'I canna but think ye were needan' a fleg. Ye shouldna hae meddled wi' the honest man's ploo, and I hope it will be a lesson to you for the time to come.'

"After that we put bye our forenigh wi' George; and I thought Babby wasna sae cherry as she used to be, but maybe that was only my ain thought. She was aye sae cheery an' sae fu' o' fun, but that night she hardly spak a word, though we expeckit she wid tease us for being sae coordly.

"I've aften thought on this since, and aften considered what the thing we saw could be, but to this day I canna mak' it out; and what happened afterwards made it stranger still.

“Aweel, time passed by, and we said naething mair about that night’s business for fear o’ folk makan’ a story o’ ’t, and sayan’ we had seen the kelpie, and the go-hairst came round again. Syne Babby Brown was marriet to Peter Frankie. She was to stop a week or twa at her father’s after the marriage, till the house at Allt na Giuthsaich would be put in order for her ; and, as she was sae vera weel liket, a’ the neighbours were askan’ her to their houses afore she gaed awa’. Ane o’ the first places she an’ Peter were to go to was Mr. Smart’s, at the Mains o’ Abergeldie, as he was a great friend o’ Peter’s.

“It was a Sunday afternoon that they gaed across at the *cradle*. The water wasna what ye would ca’ in spate, but far ower big for wadan’ in ony place, for there had been a good sup rain the nicht afore.

“After supper time (9 p.m.) some o’ our folk chanced to be out about the doors, and came in cryan’—

“‘Men, men ! there’s something nae richt about the *cradle*. There ’s lights ga’an up an’ down the water in a fearsomelike way. Run, run, an’ see that naething has happened !’

“We that were men were aff in a minute, and the rest soon followed, but there was some folk nearer at han’ there afore ’s.

“I’ll never forget that night—women, no kennan’ what to do, runnan’ about, an’ cryan’—

“‘Oh ! can naething be done, can naething be done ? Babby Brown ’s lost ! Babby Brown ’s lost !’ And the folk at the Castle and the Mains wi’ lights an’ lanterns runnan’ here and there on the ither side, and cryan’ across.

“I saw in a moment what had happened ; for there was the rope floatan’ down the water. The nicht was vera dark, but I an’ twa or three ither young fellows took a haud o’

ither's hands, and in we jumped to try to get at the rope, thinkan' they might still be haudan' on to it. The stream was awful strong, and we had enough ado to keep our feet. At last we reached it, but there was naething there—neither sicht nor soun', but the sough o' the water ga'an swirlan', swirlan' doon.

"A' hope o' recoveran' them alive was now at an end, but we couldna gae hame. The hail countra was soon gathered, but what could they do? Down, down the water edge they wandered, peeran' into the dark stream to see if they could notice onything tumblan', or ony sight o' the lost bodies. Oh, it was a waesome night!

"Peer auld George! It would hae melted a heart o' stane to hae seen him, seldom speakan' a word to onybody; but what he did say was like a meek an' humble Christian, as he was. Now and then he would step close up to the water edge as gin something had caught his sight in the stream; but we a' kent it was only to hide his grief, for instead o' lookan' into the water he would bring the corner o' his grey plaid up to his een, an' mony's the saut tear that fell into 't that sorrowfu' night.

"Ance somebody thought he saw something tumblan' wi' the water, and there was a rush to the place, but if there was onything mair than the swirl o' the stream ower the head o' a stane, we couldna find it out.

"It was just a little after this, when the folk were spreadan' themselves down the water side, that I chanced to come upon George among some arn bushes. He thought that they had a' gane past him, and that he was alane. I noticed that he was on his knees, an' coveran' his face wi' his grey plaid. A kind o' an awe came ower me, and I creepit awa' saftly that I mightna disturb him; for my ain heart tell't me he should be left to the company he had chosen

himself'. I could hae heard what he was sayan', for he was speakan' like under his breath, but a' that I catch't as I was creepan' awa' was—

“‘She was my favourite bairn, and fain would I that Thou hadst spared her whilst Thou wast pleased to spare me ; but not my will, but Thine be done.’

“When I saw him next I couldna but think he was less waesome than afore.

“After mair than three hours had been spent in vain search in the dark, where should Babby Brown's body be gotten, but just on the very stanners where my cousin an' me saw that nasty thing the nicht we were at the Craiguise? And what made it more strange still was that it was just that nicht twelvemonth by-gane that we saw it. I'm nae believer in ghosts an' sic like superstitions, and maybe it was mere chance ; but, whatever it was, it was the strangest thing that I ever met wi.'”

The bogle story is by no means difficult of explanation. The two youths had been engaged in an illicit affair during the evening, and their consciences were probably none of the easiest. Add to this that their imaginations had been teeming with supernatural fancies—they had actually been engaged in plotting a kelpie farce—and we shall find their minds in a high state of preparedness for magnifying any optical delusion into a supernatural apparition. An object to excite the fancy might be and probably was supplied by the pale beams of the setting moon streaming through the trees and reflected on the water. To this, motion could easily have been given by the wind moving the boughs. Nor is the change of colour inexplicable. A struggling ray might, as the moon pursued her course, be intercepted by a thick trunk, and thus a dark shadow would be cast where before

there was a reflected moonbeam. Much less than such a change from light to shade would have sufficed to raise the phantom they imagined they saw.

That one of the bodies should have been found there is not at all surprising, because in making a sharp turn, the river spreads out over a shallow, and nothing was more likely than that a heavy body borne along by the stream should be stranded there.

It is, however, by no means probable that the above or any similar explanation would have been satisfactory to the mind of the honest man, who saw the "nasty thing," as he was in the way of calling the vision. He always held it to be inexplicable, and having, by a general declaration of his disbelief in "kelpies, ghosts, an' sic like things," vindicated himself from any suspicion that he entertained superstitious notions regarding it, he indicated that he had said all that could be said, and that his tale was told.

Reverting to the sad death of Babby Brown, the inquisitiveness of some youthful listener usually extracted the following observation connected with it—

Listener. "And was Peter Frankie got at the same place as Babby Brown?"

"Na, na, laddie, it was mair than a week afore his body was gotten; an' there's no sayan' when it would hae been gotten had it not been for auld John MacRay. John was aye remarkable for the clearness o' his eye-sicht. He could hae seen things nae ither body could see, baith near at hand and far awa', but mair especially in the water. He could hae seen trouts there when ither folk couldna see salmon.

"Aweel, ye see, ae day, after the river had fa'an in a bit, John gaed out wi' some o' his neighbours to hae a look o' the water down about Coilacreich, but instead o' keepan'

close by the brink like the rest, he climbed up a tree on a heich bank near a quarter o' a mile out ower.

"After lookan' a whilie, he cries down to the ithers, 'I see him.'

"At first they misdoubted John, but says he, 'I'm sure I see Peter Frankie's white waistcoat, an' gin ye dinna believe me, wade in where I'll tell ye, an' see for yersels.'

"They did sae, and there they got the body stickan' on a stane in the middle o' the water."

Listener. "An' was it ever found out how the cradle rope broke?"

"No, laddie, that has aye been a mystery. Some said that it was a rotten spar that broke, an' let the rope run off; but there were sloods that it had been meddled wi'; God knows. If it was sae, may the Lord have mercy on their souls that did it."

Listener. "But what could hae gart ony body dee sic a fearful thing as that?"

"There's nae good rakan' up auld suspicions; an' far be it f'ae me to hurt onybody's character, when I ken so little about it."

Listener. "Was there ever ony ither body lost at the cradle but just Babby Brown an' Peter Frankie?"

"Aye was there, laddie, lang, lang ago, when I was about your age, there was a gauger o' the name o' Bruce lost. But there was nae wonder, or vera muckle sorrow that time."

Listener. "Foo did it happen? Tell's about it."

"Weel, ye see, Bruce had got word that there was smuggling ga'an on i' the ither side o' the water, I think they said it was about Clachanturn, an' ower he would be. The Dee was in perfect flood, f'ae bank to brae, an' nane o' the boats would venture out. He raged at the boatman o' Monaltrie, an' ca'd him a coord, till the man thought he

wasna richt in his mind, or else he was fated. But a' wouldna dee ; the boatman had mair sense, an' wouldna risk on the water.

"Bruce was a headstrong man, an', as he thought there was a plot to keep him f'ae gettan' at the smugglers, he was the mair determined to be at them. At last he comes to the cradle, an' though there was as muckle water ga'an down the haughs o' Torgalter, as there is sometimes in the Dee itself, he waded in through till he came to the post. As the man that wrought the cradle wasna very willan' to venture, for the water wasna far f'ae touchan the rope, Bruce swore that, if he wouldna come for him he would go across sprawlan' on's hands an' feet.

"Weel, the man risks, jumps into the cradle, an' off he goes. He got to this side quite safe, though the water was just touchan' his feet i' the middle. But as they were ga'an back, the weight o' the twa brought the rope further down, an' just as they were in the mids, the water caught them. Snap went the post on this side, and they were baith plunged into the roaring river. Bruce was a capital swimmer, but the man could swim nane, but he held on to the rope, and the force o' the water was so great that it soon swung him to the side. The people at the Castle were ready to catch at it as soon as it came within reach, an' there they got the man haudan' on wi' a death grip ; but Bruce was gone, an' he was never mair seen alive.

"Weeks after this his body was gotten on ane o' the islands o' Polcholaig, mair than six miles down the water. There was little mane made for Bruce, as it was his ain rashness that had caused his death and endangered the ither man's life as weel. But for Babby Brown and Peter Frankie, naething in my day has happened in this country that caused sae muckle sorrow."

The melancholy death of his favourite daughter produced an effect on George Brown's mind from which he never wholly recovered. In addition to this, the infirmities of age were creeping on him apace; and although he still took an interest in his former studies, the tone of his conversation was more subdued, and his manner of life, never wanting in gravity, now became almost solemn.

His society, however, lost none of its charms for the young. By them his fireside was more than ever frequented, and in them he seemed, with advancing years, to evince a growing interest. The patriarchal character has in it a halo of kindness and wisdom peculiarly attractive to youthful minds. But besides this character which George so well sustained, he possessed the gift, always indicative of a sound moral constitution, of entering heartily into their fancies and feelings.

During his remaining uneventful years, he still paid occasional visits to the manse and schoolhouse of Crathie; and not infrequently would be seen, staff in hand, making his way with faltering steps over the hills to the manse of Glen-gairn, where he was not only a welcome, but a valued visitor.

At last, in a good old age he was gathered to his fathers on the 9th day of February, 1828; and his mortal remains were conveyed with more respect and regret than those of any man in his station in the present or last generation to their kindred dust in the churchyard of Crathie. The writer regrets that no tombstone marks the place where repose the ashes of a man so notable in his time and station, and who for no little good in his limited sphere,

“Has left his footprints on the sands of time;”

and would express the hope that, while a few still remain who can point out the spot, this desideratum may be supplied.*

* The grave is still unmarked. Old people can remember when the churchyard contained only two or three tombstones. The practice was to place headstones on the graves, inscribed merely with the initials of the deceased.—D.

CHAPTER XVII

WALTER STEWART *alias* WATTIE PLANTS; OR THE MAN OF
MYSTICAL LORE

“ When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
An’ float the jinglin’ icy-boord,
Then *Water-Kelpies* haunt the foord,
By your direction,
An’ nighted Trav’llers are allured
To their destruction.

An’ aft your moss traversin’ *spunkies*
Decoy the wight that late an’ drunk is ;
The bleezin’, curst, mischievous monkies
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne’er mair to rise.”

—Burns.



THE man of mystical lore was another type of Highland character, that has almost, if not altogether, disappeared from Deeside; but in the earlier years of the century there were several representatives. Highlanders have long obtained a wide notoriety for their knowledge of the supernatural, more especially for the possession of that awful gift, *second sight*. In remote times, it would seem that revelations of this nature were made only to a select few, whom their Lowland

neighbours most inappropriately named wizards. The Lowland wizard was an infamous character, for whom the stake was accounted too good a fate; the Highland seer, on the other hand, was a revered and sacred personage, to injure whom was held a sacrilege of a very deep dye. In those early times, moreover, the gift was rarely bestowed on any but those of noble birth, and was often found in highest perfection, not with withered hags, as in the Lowlands, but with the head of the clan, and added very much to the importance and veneration in which he was held. It was an attribute also that belonged exclusively to hoary age.

“’Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,”

said the bold seer, who was not afraid to confront the brave Lochiel, and tell him his fate.

But a time came when the gift was shorn of its venerable and reputable character. Ambitious and unscrupulous men, seeing the advantages with which it was attended, did not hesitate to play the hypocrite, and laid claim to an endowment which they did not possess, and of which they were altogether unworthy. Thus the profession got overrun with quacks and charlatans, who finally brought it into great contempt in the eyes of the aristocrats, who had formerly a monopoly of it; and in consequence it soon became quite a plebeian attribute. At this period of its history it experienced a still worse degradation. Instead of being privileged to take a peep into futurity with his own eyes, the seer, probably as a slight on his ignoble extraction, was condemned to seek his information from ghosts, goblins, and all kinds of apparitions, who were themselves not always well informed; and hence the art descended into the sphere of demonology. It was now impossible to avoid the conclusion that those unprincipled spirits played tricks on

their human commission agents, in fact practised upon them the same arts of deception as they with such success practised on the general public. What, then, with quackery within and quackery without the line that separates the natural from the preternatural, sensible people were driven to the belief that the thing was a delusion throughout, and began to laugh it to scorn. It now reached the lowest depths of its degradation, and soon after took leave of the reprobate Highlanders.

But strange to say, having made a clean sweep of the old machinery of ghosts, goblins, and witches, the spirit of divination next appeared among the Saxons, with a new ministry of table-turners, spirit-rappers, and clairvoyants. These are only our old friends with new faces, the shoddy of effete Highland superstition. The change can in no respect be held to be an improvement, so far as the interests of mankind are concerned, whatever it may be for those of the kingdom of darkness, for in the olden time—

- “ When the Devil for weighty dispatches,
Wanted messengers cunning and bold,
He passed by the beautiful faces,
And picked out the ugly and old ;
“ Of these he made warlocks and witches,
To run on his errands by night,
Till the over-wrought hag-ridden wretches
Were as fit as the Devil to fright.
“ But whoever had been his adviser,
As his kingdom increases in growth,
He now takes his measures much wiser,
And traffics with beauty and youth.”

In the days of George Brown, Deeside possessed a good representative of the Highland ghost-seer, of whom a short account is now to be given. It is unnecessary to refer to his parentage or early life farther than to say that he rejoiced in

the highly aristocratic name of WALTER STEWART, and thus, nominally at least, was entitled to the gift he claimed in all its primitive excellence.

Walter was a singular character. In his youth he had by industry and economy got together some little money, on which, deeming it sufficient for his wants, he in middle life retired from active employment, and took up his abode in a small cottage* in a birch wood directly behind the school of Crathie. Here he led not merely a bachelor, but an anchorite life. He permitted no female to enter his house, which, nevertheless, as he had a taste for domestic duties, he kept in a marvellous state of tidiness. To the cottage was attached a little garden, in which he spent a good deal of his waking hours, and in the cultivation of which he displayed no small horticultural skill. From the attention he paid to it, and especially from the quantities of kail and cabbage plants he reared and sold, he acquired the nickname of "WATTIE PLANTS," and was seldom referred to under any other designation.

His fruit, as well as his vegetables, were the best in the country. The writer well remembers what a temptation the loaded bushes were to the boys at school. Yet, though constantly before our view, for the garden wall was low, the boldest of us shrank from entering surreptitiously. We were strongly impressed with the belief that it was enchanted ground, that, besides material defences, such as concealed man-traps and spring-guns, it was guarded by supernatural engines that had the power of stiffening up our limbs and depriving us of the faculty of flight in the event of a surprise. These ideas, which Wattie no doubt took pains to impress upon us, more effectually preserved his garden from our

* The house, somewhat altered, is still standing.—D.

depredations than if it had been surrounded by a wall ten feet high.

Though living in this secluded manner, he was fond of the society of his own sex, but he preferred seeking it abroad to finding it at home. In fact, with the exception of George Brown, seldom did any one see the interior of his dwelling. His own haunts of an evening were the manse, the school-house, and especially George Brown's fireside; yet he was perhaps the only man in the whole country on whose erroneous theological opinions George could make no impression. But though their religious notions were wide as the poles asunder, the men themselves were familiar friends.

Though very illiterate, Wattie was passionately fond of argument, especially on deep and mysterious subjects; but failing that, he could enjoy story-telling or even hilarious mirth. Not only did he set at nought the religious opinions of his friend, but he was not in the least afraid to dispute the speculative or theological positions of the schoolmaster and minister, with both of whom he took surprising liberties. As an illustration—

One Saturday evening, having got around him in the schoolhouse kitchen a few companions disposed for fun, they all became so hearty as quite to forget the annoyance they were causing the schoolmaster, who was preparing a sermon for the following day in an adjoining room. When the poor man could bear the disturbance no longer, he stepped into the kitchen to remonstrate. There Wattie, who never made or understood an apology, found himself called upon to defend the proceedings complained of, and very coolly replied—

“What! do you think that people must stint themselves o' their pleasures for your convenience?”

he deemed it prudent to have nothing to do with them, feeling no confidence that any of his fair friends might not lead him into some scrape and then suddenly vanish into thin air. He believed that intellectually they were considerably man's superiors, and saw through him much more thoroughly than he saw through them—an opinion which he held was sufficiently proved by the proclivity and capacity of the sex to become witches and fortune tellers. The only individual in whose favour he made any concession from these notions was Babby Brown. So winning were her ways, that he was constrained slightly to modify his views of woman on her account. She alone was able to thaw the severity of his judgment, and wring from him the only doubt that he was ever known to express regarding its soundness—"Weel, weel, Babby, to please ye we'll say that a' the glamour ye cast ower us is out o' nae ill intention, but only to mak' fun to yerselves."

He had no belief in physical laws. The whole phenomena of nature were the direct and immediate acts of spiritual beings. The government of the world was a disputed sway, and nature the battle-field between the two belligerent powers. So evenly balanced were they in strength that it would be difficult to say which might prevail, were there not behind and above their warfare the decrees of fate or of the Deity to turn the scales ultimately in favour of the good. As a sample of his natural philosophy take the following :

On the memorable night of the great flood of August, 1829, the schoolmaster was roused from sleep by the commotion of the elements and the rain, which had found its way through the joints of the slates and by the chimney, and was coursing in torrents through every part of the house. It was five a.m., and as black as Erebus, except when the



WATTIE PLANTS' HOUSE.

lightning's flash glared across the murky sky. On looking out he was much surprised to find that his neighbour Wattie was also astir, early rising not being one of his habits, and not only astir but had his cottage all aglow with fire and light as if he were illuminating it in honour of some great event. He therefore paid him a visit and found him in the highest spirits, not in the least alarmed by the thunder and rain. To an expression of surprise at this, Wattie answered—

“Have I not great cause for rejoicing? Have you not understood what has been going on for the last three days?”

“No, Walter,” replied the schoolmaster, “what has it been?”

“I'm astonished at that, and you such a learned man,” continued Wattie. “Why, three days ago Satan began to cast up embankments against this world, cloud after cloud, and darkness behind darkness. His design, doubtless, was to bury it in outer darkness to all eternity, and for three days he prospered. But I had faith that, as our Saviour burst open the dark abode of death on the third day, so on the third day this dark design would receive a check. While I was this night musing on my bed by whose hand this deliverance would be wrought, lo and behold! the Archangel Michael opened his artillery on the foul fiend; and I said, I will arise and be a beholder of this great work, and rejoice and be exceeding glad.” And then, pointing up to the dark clouds where the thunder was rolling, he exclaimed, “Eh, man! isn't there carnage up there? Hear the noise o' the cannon, and see how the blood o' the slaughtered squadrons is coman' pouran' down!”

It may seem strange that a person so wild and fantastic in his ideas should have been admitted into the place of bosom companion to a man so staid and well informed as

George Brown. But there is an attraction in contrariety no less than in similarity of mind. We are drawn to men who have what we desiderate almost as strongly as to those with whom we hold gifts in common. But whether it was this, or the poetry of Wattie's conceptions, or their very extravagance and originality, that gave his company zest in the estimation of George Brown, the men found something agreeable in each other's society, though they seldom agreed, or agreed to differ. In fact, they were in a state of chronic contradiction, which, however, only gave piquancy to their intercourse, and did not for any length of time interrupt their friendship.

Wattie's visits to George were at irregular intervals, usually two or three a week, and always in the evenings ; while he, in return, was expected to dine with Wattie every Sunday he was at church. Wattie himself seldom went to church ; not because he had any objection on the score of conscience, or that he was likely to hear unpalatable doctrine, but simply because it was quite contrary to the rule for him to be out of bed in time. George, on the other hand, was most regular in his attendance. By the time the congregation was dismissed, Wattie was ready to receive his friend, and probably had set about preparing some dinner. As in other respects, so in this, the men were antipodal ; George was a stoic in the matter of meats and drinks, the bare necessities of life were all he cared for. Wattie, on the other hand, was in his own way an epicurean, and might have vied with a Frenchman in the art of cookery.

While the pot was boiling, the two generally retired to the garden if the day was fine. Seated there, it was a marvel if they did not get into controversy, which sometimes ran so high as to terminate unfortunately for the dinner party. When Wattie's absurdities were bearing hard on George's patience, he was in the habit of seeking relief for

his outraged feelings by continually adjusting the grey plaid which he always wore slung over his shoulder in Highland fashion. This peculiarity was so well known, that, when the neighbours at the schoolhouse observed it, the remark was generally made, "You'll find there will be no dinner party to-day, George Brown's plaid is too restless." It however went through several stages of movement corresponding to the rising choler of the wearer, before the final catastrophe occurred. From slight adjustments, it passed into being pulled down, and hitched up with increasing rapidity and violence, till at last, springing to his feet, George would pluck it down, and with an indignant toss send the end of it flying over his shoulder, and march off with an air of great contempt for his companion, leaving him to cook and discuss his dinner in solitude as he best might. Wattie never attempted to smoothe matters by offering an apology, nor was he in the least annoyed by his friend's ruffled temper. He paid his own visits as usual; and before next Sunday George had forgot the offence, and forgiven the offender, who, however, was quite ready to repeat it afresh should they chance again to fall upon the same subject of discussion. But after the melancholy death of his favourite daughter, already noticed, it was observed that, though George paid his visits as usual, he never allowed himself to be inveigled into keenness of argument by any provocation on the part of his friend.

CHAPTER XVIII

WATTIE PLANTS

(continued)

“Grim reader, have you ever seen a Ghost?”—*Byron.*

“That the dead are seen no more,” said Imlac, “I will not undertake to maintain against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages and of all nations. There is no people, rude or unlearned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth; those that never heard of one another could not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by some cavillers can very little weaken the general evidence; and some who deny it with their tongue, confess it with their fears.”—*Rasselas.*



AFTER the death of George Brown, Walter Stewart, who was a much younger man, sought out other companions, and with them continued to hold argument on all matters in heaven and earth that his wild imagination could conceive of. In the winter fore-nights he wandered about incessantly seeking discussion, and often contrived not a little to while away a dull evening. The writer has been favoured with the following account by a friend, who knew him intimately—

It is not quite easy for me to analyse the feelings which as a boy I entertained towards "Wattie Plants." I, and the other boys of my age, feared him, but we did not dislike him. Nothing could restrain us from listening to his stories, and yet these stories inspired us only with terror. They had for us a kind of fascination, from which we could not tear ourselves, not unlike, I have often thought, that attributed to the basilisk's stare on the victim on which he fixes his eye. We could not resist being listeners of his tales, and yet their rehearsal imparted to us but torture and misery.

We had a sort of presentiment when he was to spend an evening in our neighbourhood; and his approach, descried in the distance, was hailed with a kind of morbid anxiety. We never let him out of sight till he entered the house where he intended to pass the fore-night. I have a most distinct recollection of these evenings. Wattie generally planted himself beside the gudeman on one side of the hearth, while we, the boys of two or three neighbouring families, huddled as closely together as possible in the *chimney lug* on the other, the older members of the household occupying the intervening space.

Wattie was soon in full swing with his ghost and goblin stories. He had a queer way of screwing down his eyebrows, so that we seldom caught a glimpse of his eye, but we watched his weird face with an intense and fixed stare that was never once withdrawn, unless to dart a furtive glance at the doorway to make sure that none of his *doolies* were stealing in upon us. I can well remember the torture of apprehension I sometimes suffered when compelled to sit with my back to the door while Wattie was relating his interviews with the emissaries of the kingdom of darkness. But this was little in comparison with what I had occasionally to endure when selected to bear him company on his way home.

He was, notwithstanding his familiarity with the denizens of goblin-dom, not a little alarmed of them, and exceedingly disliked making his way alone in the dark. I suspect, however, he pretended more alarm than he felt, and that his object was to secure a companion on the way, not so much to ward off the ghosts, as to listen to his narratives. Some one, I think Dr. Johnson, has said, "the pink of society is a good listener." Wattie was quite of this opinion; it mattered little who the listener was, provided he could listen well—a child was as good as a philosopher. Though he relished argumentation, it was only for the sake of excitement. Once roused, and in full career of speech, he paid not the smallest attention to what might be said on the other side, and seldom gave his opponent an opportunity of interrupting him.

When the disagreeable duty fell on me of seeing him home, he generally caught hold of my hand at setting out, and seldom relinquished it till he dismissed me on crossing the charmed circle which he had described round his dwelling. To get over the way often took a long while, for he walked slowly and talked incessantly. One of these occasions is still very vividly in my recollection, and will serve as a sample of the others:

Our path lay first through a birch wood, and then under the shadow of a lofty precipice. The first object that attracted his attention was a foraging hare that crossed our path. Wattie instantly stopped, and with a large amount of mystery in his voice and manner, enquired if I had seen anything. It was of no use for me to suggest, which however I did, that it was only a hare.

"A hare!" he contemptuously replied, "it's no more a hare than I'm a hare. It's a witch. I wonder now if it's auld Janet out on her cantrips. Did you notice, laddie, had

she a limp? But we'se be up sides wi' her the nicht at ony rate. Think ye now gin we be past the place where she crossed the roadie?"

"I'm sure we're that," said I; "but what about it?"

"Eneuch about it," says he. "I'se let ye see how to manage the like o' auld Janet when she's out on the stravaig as she is the nicht."

He then with great deliberation proceeded to trace a cross on the path with the point of his camaig (walking stick). This done, he examined it for an instant or two from various points of view to satisfy himself that it was executed according to rule, and then in his most solemn tone of voice pronounced over it the words, *secula seculorum*; after which, recovering his usual manner, he added in a taunting strain—

"Noo, Janet, my lass, there's a knot on your tether ye'll nae lowse this twa days!"

After this, he discoursed of witches and their cantrips, and of the various methods of restraining them, and told me how the monks of the dark ages had discovered this and the other disenchantment. I cannot now recollect particulars, but he had a long account to give of the potentiality of the mystic words, *secula seculorum*, the discovery of which he attributed to a monk of Padua, in Italy.

We had now got to a part of the wood haunted by owls and night-hawks. As these passed over our heads on noiseless wing, or uttered their shrill scream from some neighbouring tree, Wattie every now and again exclaimed, "There they go, I wonder what that one wants now." At last, just as we had cleared the wood, the wild pipe of a night-hawk close at hand brought him again to a dead pause, and after maintaining a solemn silence for more than a minute, he asked, in apparent alarm—

"Did you hear that?" and without giving me time to

reply, continued, "that's one o' the spirits o' the upper air. They aften wander about at night ; but dinna be feert, laddie, they seldom devour ony human bodie. Among themselves they're very cruel, an' fecht an' quarrel extraordinar' ; an' they michtna be that chancey even to a human creatur' gin they took an ill-will at him." This was said for the purpose of quieting my fears, for I believe I was by this time almost trembling in his grasp ; but without waiting for the soothing effect of his encouragement, such as it was, he went on—

"I mind, three years ago, ane o' them, for some misty manners (misdemeanours), was chained to the rock up there for a long time. It would wail awa' for a while, an' then scream out wi' vera pain. It often made me wae to hear the peer thing ; for I well kent it was enduran' its torture. And what think ye were they doan' to 't ? Mair than a score o' tormentors were round about it jobban' 't wi' their sharp little knives, an' it skirlan' wi' pain. Then they would let it alane for a wee, an' it would peuke awa' like a bairnie greetan.' Syne they would at it again, an' it would to the skirlan' again.

"Weel, ae nicht as I was passan', just about where we are ae noo, they were by ordnar' severe on 't ; an' thinks I, it 's mair than I am able to thole ; I'll interfere on behalf o' the creatur'. Wi' that I steps across the heather there, an' makes a demonstration ; but I'll no try sic a protick again. Down they came upon me wi' a skailach like wallapyweeks, and gin I hadna taen to my heels, an' that wi' a' speed, there's no sayan' what they micht hae deen."

Calculated to fill me with alarm as these tales were, yet such was my confidence in Wattie's experience and ability to meet whatever danger might arise, that, while in his company, I seldom lost a feeling of security, akin perhaps to what one experiences in a storm at sea, from observing the self-

possession and unconcern of an experienced captain and crew ; but I cannot yet think of the homeward journey without a shudder. Every bush was suspected of harbouring some malignant spirit, and every rustle among the branches sent a shock through my nervous system, from the effects of which, in spite of my philosophy, I sometimes feel I have not yet quite recovered. Even now, I cannot pass through a dark wood late at night, without recalling those boyish experiences, and

“ Gloweran’ round wi’ anxious care
Lest bogles catch me unaware.”

CHAPTER XIX

WATTIE PLANTS

(concluded)



ATTIE'S last bosom cronie was a neighbouring farmer, as full of argument as himself, with an imagination as vigorous of wing, and a temper as imperturbable. The two set at nought all previous theories of things mundane and super-mundane, yet they seldom agreed on a new code of belief. The farmer, who was an intelligent, well-informed man, often played with his neighbour's credulity, and did not really entertain all the notions he put forth in argument against him. Though of sound religious principles, he was so full of quaint Scotch humour, and Wattie's absurdities afforded such a tempting butt for its practice, that it must be allowed he could not always restrain it from touching upon matters that ought to be held more sacred; and yet it was not such matters, but his neighbour's absurd speculations regarding them, that he had any intention of speaking lightly of.

On religious subjects Wattie therefore considered him heretical, and laboured hard, but in vain, to convince him of his errors. The errors generally related to the condition of departed souls, and the existence of an intermediate state.

It was no unusual thing for the two to fall to this subject afresh after an evening spent upon it, when the farmer went to see Wattie home, and to spend hours on the discussion, walking slowly backwards and forwards between their respective houses.

It happened one evening, while they were thus perambulating, that the debate ran unusually high; and to settle the matter they entered into an engagement that whoever departed this life first should come back and inform the survivor of the actual state of things in the other world. In their after private disquisitions, frequent allusions were made to this covenant, but no third party knew anything of it till more than a year after Wattie's death. The following is the farmer's account of the transaction—

“Aweel, ye see, it was about purgatory. We had argued a long while east and wast the road, and at last it came to, ‘What will ye wager?’ Wattie was keen for a wager; but I says to him, ‘Wattie,’ says I, ‘by the time we’ll ken fa’s i’ the richt, fa’ll care for the payment?’

“‘At ony rate,’ says he, ‘let’s make a paction that whoever dies first, he’ll come back an’ tell the ither how things are regulated i’ the ither warl’.’

“‘I think there may be some eese in that,’ says I; ‘let’s agree as to time an’ place.’

“‘It maun be i’ the nicht time,’ says Wattie; ‘for, ye see, I dinna believe that it’s given to the spirits o’ the departed to revisit this warl’ i’ the daytime. Leastwise, I never heard tell o’ sic a thing as a ghost appearan’ i’ the face o’ the sun.’

“‘Weel, weel,’ says I, ‘we’ll tak’ the time we’re surest o’; we’ll say the mirk hour o’ midnicht.’

“‘Sae be’t,’ says he, ‘sae be’t; twal o’clock that day week after the first o’s dees.’

"Thinks I, that's gey an' sharp. I verily believe it's his opinion that I'll be the first to wear awa', an' he's impatient to hear.

"'Na, na,' says I, 'as we're upon so weighty a business as this, we maun mak' it firm an' sure. I'm nae sayan' that aither o's is vera blate; but in a week's time we would hardly hae seen about us richt, an' there'll be sae muckle to see. Na, na, we'll say that nicht twalmonth.'

"Says he, 'We may be baith gane afore that time.'

"'Allowan,' say I; 'we'll baith ken then; but I'm for nane o's coman' back wi' a wrang story to the ither. Na, na, let's tak time to get acquaint.'

"He would hae yielded onything to me that nicht, he was sae anxious to get the bargain struck; and says he—

"'We'll haud it sae; twal o'clock that nicht twalmonth, aifter the first o's dees. An' noo for the trystan' place; what do ye say to my yard?'

"Thinks I, 'ye're lookan' out for yer ain convenience, my man; but I'll agree to naething o' the kind,' and says I—

"'Wattie, we maun mak this bargain fair a' the ways o't, or it's doubtfu' gin ony o's be allowed to keep it. It maun be naither at your house nor at mine, but half-gates atween the twa. There's a bonnie howie ower here below the rocks, just about even distance. We're nae likely to be disturbit there; so that there may be nae mistake, we'll just step across an see 't.' Wi' that I wears awa', an' Wattie follows.

"Doon we sat upon a bankie, an' had our sneeshan; an' syne we concluded the bargain, an' shook han's on the heads o't.

"From that day forth, I verily believe naething would hae delighted him sae much as to hae heard that I was dead.

And yet he liket me vera weel for a' that ; but he was sae impatient for the meeting, that he couldna keep f'ae speakan' o't ony time we happened to be passing the way, an' aye as gin I were to dee first. But he wasna to be gratified, peer man ; for about two years after we had made the paction he deet himsel', an' left me i' the land o' the livan'.

"I had my ain thought about the meeting, but still I resolved to keep the tryst, an' tell 't naebody a word about it, for fear o' bean' watched. When the time cam' round, I did go. Oh yes, I did go, oftener than once ; for ye see, I kent Wattie was nae arithmeticionar, though he had a good memory, an' he micht maybe hae mista'en the nicht, though he wasna likely to hae gane far agley. So I gaed three times to the trysting place, the nicht afore, the vera nicht, an' the nicht after, an' waited ilka time f'ae eleven o'clock till one o'clock ; but Wattie didna appear ; oh no, he did not."

"Once," says a friend, who was very intimate with the farmer, and esteemed him highly, but whose opinions on those matters were of a more modern type than those the farmer held, or affected to hold, "once, as he concluded his account of the covenant between him and Wattie, I thought I had him floored on the subject of the reappearance of the dead, but he got out of it in a most characteristic way.

" 'Now,' said I, ' seeing that Wattie, for all his anxiety to meet you, was not permitted to come back, does not that prove to you that there is no such thing as ghosts appearing to living men ? '

" 'It does nothing of the kind,' he replied ; ' but it proves to me what I was gey an' sure o' before, that my notion o' the ither warl' was richt an' Wattie's was quite wrong. Ye didna ken Wattie sae weel as I did. When I began to think what could hae keepit the bodie f'ae stan'an' till's tryst, an' haudan' me waitan' sae lang, I had little doubt about the

cause, an' says I to mysel', 'ye was aye a cumstairie bodie. But, howsomever, I ken the reason just as weel as gin ye had come back, Wattie, my man. Ye fan out that ye was wrang an' I was richt, an' would ye come back to own it to me? Hem, na! that wouldna hae been like ye. But had it been itherwise, ye would hae been here hours before the time. Oh yes, ye wou-l-d. So I took my crawl awa' hame, in nae vera good humour ye may be sure, an' gaedna back mair. Noo that's the conclusion, an' nae ither that's to be drawn f'ae Wattie's non-appearance. He was vera awkward an' bigotted in his ain opinion, but there was nae ill wi' him, peer creatur'; an' I'm sure I wish him weel; an' though things haena answered his expectations a' thegither i' the ither warl', I hope he's nae ill aff for a' that, peer bodie.'"

Whether the farmer really went to the trysting place, and felt as he described, the writer has some doubt, and rather inclines to the belief that the account he gave to credulous questioners was merely a play of fancy and humour. Be that as it may, such compacts were at that time by no means uncommon. The peasant literature was full of accounts of them. Among others a very popular one, and firmly believed, was "The Laird o' Coull's Ghost." But it was not merely among the illiterate and superstitious that hopes were entertained of solving the mystery of a future state by means of ghost revelations, as may be seen from the following extract from Lord Brougham's Diary, lately published, and with which we take leave of ghosts and second-sight seer:

"Tired with the cold of yesterday, I was glad to take advantage of a hot bath before I turned in. And here a most remarkable thing happened to me—so remarkable that I must tell the story from the beginning. After I left the High School, I went with G——, my most intimate friend,

to attend the classes in the University. There was no divinity class, but we frequently in our walks discussed and speculated upon many grave subjects—among others, on the immortality of the soul, and on a future state. This question, and the possibility, I will not say of ghosts walking, but of the dead appearing to the living, were subjects of much speculation ; and we actually committed the folly of drawing up an agreement, *written with our blood*, to the effect, that whichever of us died first should appear to the other, and thus solve any doubts we had entertained of the ‘life after death.’ After we had finished our classes at the College, G—— went to India, having got an appointment there in the civil service. He seldom wrote to me, and after the lapse of a few years I had almost forgotten him ; moreover, his family having little connection with Edinburgh, I seldom saw or heard anything of them, or of him through them, so that all the old schoolboy intimacy had died out, and I had nearly forgotten his existence. I had taken, as I have said, a warm bath, and while lying in it and enjoying the comfort of the heat, after the late freezing I had undergone, I turned my head round, looking towards the chair on which I had deposited my clothes, as I was about to get up out of the bath. On the chair sat G——, looking calmly at me. How I got out of the bath I know not, but on recovering my senses I found myself sprawling on the floor. The apparition, or whatever it was that had taken the likeness of G——, had disappeared. This vision produced such a shock that I had no inclination to talk about it, or to speak about it even to Stuart ; but the impression it made upon me was too vivid to be easily forgotten ; and so strongly was I affected by it, that I have here written down the whole history, with the date 19th December, and all the particulars, as they are now fresh before me. No doubt I had fallen asleep ; and that the

appearance presented so distinctly to my eyes was a dream, I cannot for a moment doubt ; yet for years I had had no communication with G——, nor had there been anything to recall him to my recollection ; nothing had taken place during our Swedish travels either connected with G—— or with India, or with anything relating to him, or to any member of his family. I recollected quickly enough our old discussion, and the bargain we had made. I could not discharge from my mind the impression that G—— must have died, and that his appearance to me was to be received by me as proof of a future state ; yet all the while I felt convinced that the whole was a dream ; and so painfully vivid, and so unfading was the impression, that I could not bring myself to talk of it, or to make the slightest allusion to it. I finished dressing, and as we had agreed to make an early start, I was ready by six o'clock, the hour of our early breakfast.

“[Brougham, October 16, 1862.—I have just been copying out from my journal the account of this strange dream : *Certissima mortis imago !* And now to finish the story, begun about sixty years since. Soon after my return to Edinburgh, there arrived a letter from India, announcing G——’s death ! and stating that he had died on the 19th of December !! Singular coincidence ! yet when one reflects on the vast number of dreams which night after night pass through our brains, the number of coincidences between the vision and the event are perhaps fewer and less remarkable than a fair calculation of chances would warrant us to expect. Nor is it surprising, considering the variety of our thoughts in sleep, and that they all bear some analogy to the affairs of life, that a dream should sometimes coincide with a contemporaneous or even with a future event. This is not much more wonderful than that a person, whom we had no reason

to expect, should appear to us at the very moment we had been thinking or speaking of him. So common is this that it has for ages grown into the proverb, 'Speak of the devil.'

"I believe every such seeming miracle is, like every ghost story, capable of explanation.]"

CHAPTER XX

ALEXANDER DAVIDSON ; OR THE LAST OF THE OLD POACHERS

“ The steady brain, the sinewy limb
“ To leap, to climb, to dive, to swim ;
“ The iron frame inured to bear
“ Each dire inclemency of air ;
“ Nor less confirmed to undergo
“ Fatigue’s chill faint, and famine’s throe.” —*Scott.*



THE propriety or impropriety of some kinds of life is to be judged of, not from any fixed canon, but from a relative point of view, and their social conventional aspect at the time they were enacted. This statement, of course, holds good only so far as man’s estimate of morality in his day and generation goes ; for we must logically believe, whatever we do sentimentally and educationally, that the habit of “rieving,” or cattle-lifting, was abstractly as immoral in the days of Rob Roy as it would be in our own. So great an influence, however, has a perverse conventionalism on the mind of a man as to distort and pervert in his moral nature all honest notions of *meum* and *tuum*, and to paralyze in his mind the legitimate use of “The Law and the Testimony” of an inflexible standard of

appeal. To illustrate what is meant : Rob Roy lived at a time when such lax notions prevailed about cattle-lifting and money-taking from the wealthy, as to lead him not only to believe that there was no harm in this kind of life, but positively to think that, when the Chief of the McGregors could not live any other way—work or even commerce was out of the question—it afforded a means of livelihood not unbefitting a chieftain and gentleman. He would not allow young Rob to be taken to Glasgow by the Bailie, with whom his name is indissolubly associated, to learn the trade of a weaver, or any other honest calling. So perverted were the minds of men of this order of thinking, that, though they accounted the kind of theft spoken of rather meritorious than otherwise, they would sooner have burned their fingers than have been found burglarizing away the silver plate of those gentlemen from whom they would take a purse well lined with “gowd guineas,” or a well fed ox. “Do you think the chief of the Macgregors is such a dog as to steal your silver plate?” is the language Rob Roy would most naturally have used.

Whether, at any time, a sense of wrong-doing crossed the minds of these men, in their deviations from what now appears to a child the supreme law of right, may be open to question ; but it is certain that there was at a more recent date another class of men, by many not thought much better than Rob Roy, who believed most sincerely in the legitimacy of their calling. One of these, ALEXANDER DAVIDSON, is the subject of this sketch.

Sandy held determinedly by the old saying that “the fish out of the water and the deer out of the forest were his, as well as the rich man’s.” He used to boast very much that he once argued the point with a minister the writer knew very well, and “fairly beat him.” Whatever may be thought

of the casuistry by which he imposed upon himself, it is certain that he did not come to this conclusion unreasoningly. He was even punctilious in carrying his principle out into nice details. As an instance, he rarely, if ever, poached on the grounds of those who had recently paid hard cash for their property, saying, "It would be like stealing to take game from men who had really paid for them;" though he always questioned the right of the original disposer to take money for what he had no good title to himself, at least no exclusive property in. He held with many in our own day that, if it were inquired into, it would be found that the ancestors of many of our proprietors did not come fairly by their estates; and that in any case, neither they nor their ancestors had paid hard cash for their lands, and had no exclusive right to the natural productions of these lands. On this principle also he held that "there was no harm in taking a stick out of the wood, if it was not planted, but to help one's self to planted timber was theft." Sandy and the class of men, of which he was a splendid specimen, are not for a moment to be confounded with the poachers or roughs, teeming in our large towns and villages, who hold at arm's length all law, human and divine. He is rather to be classed with the men in our own day, who account the Game Laws as an iniquity on the statute book, and who only want his daring and bravery to shoot a deer or a muircock, with as little scruple of conscience as he felt. The well known tenderness of conscience of this wonderful man in his own way will show itself as we proceed with a sketch of his life.

Alexander Davidson, or, as he was more frequently called, Sandy Davidson, or not unusually "Roch Sanie," from his long beard and moustache, though, were he living now, the appellation would not be so distinctive as it then was, was born at Mill of Inver in the year 1792. His grandfather, or

great-grandfather migrated thither from Glenmuick, early in the century, having previously come from Donside for something not so commendable as "biggan' kirks." He probably was in the position of the grandfather of Tetsy, Dr. Johnson's wife. When, in their courting days the Doctor, to test the sincerity of her love, informed her that his grandfather had been hanged for sheep-stealing, she replied that hers was not hanged, but should have been. In those days there were many men accounted worthy, who should have been hanged for sheep-stealing, or something worse. "Muckle Forbes," whose history George Brown used to narrate, was one of them. He also migrated from Donside for a misdemeanour similar to that which drove Sandy's ancestor from that country. They were unlike the migratory birds in this respect, that the latter leave on account of the cold, the former from the place getting "too hot for them."

But to return to Sandy. Of his early years and education little is known, but it may be inferred from the fact that he could read well and write ordinarily so, that it had not been so much neglected as was too common at that time among people in the social position of his parents. But whether he got much school education or not, he must have been early imbued with the superstitions of Highland Deeside, having known from childhood the "story of the black han'," a ghostly visitation experienced by his grandfather. Perhaps it may be as well here to narrate this story, as it will be an apology for Sandy's strong belief in the preternatural, and for his feeling a little timid, or as he used himself to express it, "a little cerie," at the murky hour of midnight, when lying out, as he almost invariably did, among the wild mountains of Lochnagar, Ben Muicdhuì, or Benavon.

In the year of grace 1767 there lived at Mill of Inver,

Crathie, a brave and honest miller of the name of John Davidson. On a certain night he, along with another man, who, as the sequel of the story shows, was not so courageous when unearthly visitors made their appearance, was engaged in drying corn. The night was a very dark one, and none of the neighbours were abroad to keep the miller from "thinking lang." He therefore directed his assistant to keep watch over the kiln, while he lay down to sleep on some sacks behind the door, telling him to awaken him when the corn was ready for turning. The dryster promised to do this; and then, to beguile the time, busied himself in clipping off his beard with a scissors, which, according to the custom of the men of that day, he carried for the purpose. The miller, who had been mistimed for several previous nights, was soon fast asleep. But his well-earned repose was of short duration. All the mill and even barn doors of that period were provided with a round hole about the centre, and from this hole a heavy weight was dropped upon the sleeper's breast, which awoke him just in time to see a black hand withdrawn from the opening, while beside him lay a stone of considerable size, that appeared to have been just taken from the bed of the mill burn. Instead of being alarmed at the uncouth visitant, or deeming it unearthly, he came to the conclusion that it was some person practically joking with him, and lay down again to sleep. But his slumbers were again disturbed by another visit from the "black han'," and another stone dropped upon his breast. His temper was now ruffled, and he resolved within himself that, if the thing should be again repeated, he would rush out, lay hold of and chastise the perpetrator who would thus be caught "black handed." He had not long to wait; a heavy sleep seemed to have fallen upon him. Again the black hand appeared, and the third stone was dropped upon his breast. Springing up in hot

haste, he was just about to rush forth, when he was startled by a voice that spoke 'richt howe'—"Follow me." Before obeying the unearthly summons, the miller cast his eyes on the man sitting on the kiln-logie, whose ghastly visage and quaking limbs bespoke his fear, and in order to prove how far he might be serviceable in the circumstances, he said to him, "Will you go out, or will you watch the kiln?"

"Go out yoursel'," was his instant reply, "for I winna."

Finding there was no help to be got from his craven companion, he opened the door and issued forth. The darkness of the night not a little appalled him, but he was supported by unnatural courage; or, if certain doctrines of the present day be true, that spirit afflatus was upon him which transforms its subject into a spirit-meeting condition of mind. Notwithstanding the almost palpable darkness in which he found himself, he was conscious of a still darker shadow that preceded him across a small foot bridge over the Fearder, the stream on which the mill stood, and then on through a glade to a "heugh" beside the stream. Here the apparition came to a stand; and the miller, knowing that a combat was inevitable, rushed forward, and laid hold of it, resolving to do battle with it according to the rules laid down in ghost lore, which saith that no spirit can be laid "unless words can be had of it," and that it will not speak till "the air be let between it and the ground." After a long wrestle he succeeded in accomplishing this feat; and then his antagonist gave utterance to its troubles. It revealed its name, though the miller, like all spirit wrestlers, would never divulge it; but it informed him, as the cause of its disquietude, that in the days of its fleshly sojourn it had stolen a sword-handle, which, having iron on it and being concealed in the earth, debarred its former unlawful possessor from finding rest in the world of spirits.

The progress of events now brings the tale a link nearer to Sandy Davidson. On the day after the interview above narrated, the miller directed his son, Sandy's uncle, whom the writer remembers well, and has often heard tell the story of the "Black Han'," to look out for a spade and bring it to him. When the little boy did so, the father, addressing him in a more solemn tone than was his wont, said, "Come awa', laddie, wi' me," and then directed his steps to the kail-yard, where he began digging industriously beside an apple tree. The mysterious silence he preserved regarding the purpose of his work impressed the boy much; and still more was he struck, when, after digging a long while and going very deep, he began to mutter to himself with evident tokens on his face of disappointment, "I doot I'm wrang." But he still went on digging downwards, and when at last the spade struck on something hard, his son observed a light of joy suffuse his countenance, as he handed him the spade, saying, "Noo, noo, laddie, gae 'wa and put by the spade, the 'black han'' will get rest noo."

This sword-handle was kept for many years, laid up on the top of one of the beds, as a trophy of the old man's encounter with the "black han'"; and as the story was often told in the hearing of Sandy, during his most impressionable years, and the sword-handle exhibited in token of its truth, it is little wonder that he was deeply imbued with the superstitious notions of his forefathers.

Having said so much about his grandfather, it may not be amiss to notice shortly his father, who also was a remarkable man, if not for doing battle with spirits, at least for holding his own against any beings of flesh and blood, in a set-to with cudgels. All the old people the writer has ever met, who knew Alexander Davidson, Sandy's father, are unanimous in saying that for personal appearance, noble

courage, sprightly manners, as well as for the moral qualities of a warm and kind heart, he had no peer on Deeside in his day. It is a pity these qualities were not better directed. Their possessor was well fitted to shine in other walks than the barbarous one into which he was led by the infamous custom of the age, in which he had no match in a very extensive district of country. It must not, however, be inferred that, though he was universally acknowledged to be the prince of fighters, he was a rough, or even a quarrelsome man. The combats in which he won his laurels were not accounted brawls, they were rather looked upon as trials of strength. In short, they were ill-regulated plebeian tournaments, copied from the more aristocratic engagements so named in previous centuries, and adapted to the circumstances of the time, and of those who engaged in them; and they had the very same objects in view—to earn the envy of men and the admiration of women. In a purely moral point of view it might be difficult to determine who was most to be condemned, the knight of the bloody tournament, who with lance in rest spurred on to meet his antagonist that he might win the applause of beauty, or the man who, at a penny wedding or a Tarland market, should, for his prowess in dealing most plaguey knocks, be crowned by the shouts of an admiring crowd, *king o' the cudgel*.

Alexander Davidson, having fairly earned this meed over a large district, was held in high admiration by his own class. But he had other qualities, qualities of head and heart, that procured him the friendship of those above him in the scale of society. Besides being the hero of country balls and festivals, he was on terms of familiarity with the surrounding gentry, and a guest at all their rejoicings. Captain Gordon, Abergeldie—he to whom reference has already been made in connection with the 77th

regiment—was particularly fond of him, and they were very often together. Though in different stations in life, they were men very like each other in natural gifts; and they held one accomplishment in common, they were both great dancers. Of Captain Gordon's dancing powers it is related that he leaped so high, and possessed such agility that he could cross his legs three times before coming to the floor. At that time, men in his position did not think it derogatory to their social standing to rub shoulders with their poor neighbours at balls and weddings; and it was no unusual sight on such occasions to witness the Captain and Sandy trying each other's mettle at an old Highland "headset." This easy intercourse permitted a familiarity of speech between Davidson and his superiors, which is now a thing of the past, but of which the following will serve as an illustration.

In Aberarder, the district in which Sandy resided, there happened to be a penny wedding; and of course Captain Gordon was there to help to set up the young couple in the world. Sandy, it would seem, as was usual with him in his neighbourhood, was governor of the feast. The Captain (he was afterwards Colonel), observing that there was rather a scarcity of drinkables, seized the opportunity to chaff the master of ceremonies, knowing the generosity of his nature, and addressed him, "How is it, Sandy, that ye have not plenty of whisky going among the people?" To which Sandy replied in the same high-toned strain, "If I were Captain Gordon of Abergeldie, I would order in an anker forthwith." "It shall be done, Sandy," said the Captain, quietly remarking to himself, "Sandy has the best of it."

Whether there was any fighting at this wedding or not is not recorded; but it is certain that hardly ever did a penny wedding pass over without some display of this nature, and when people from different districts met at one, they never

parted without such a trial of skill and strength. One of these occasions was the direct cause of Davidson's strong life being snatched away.

At Ruibalchlaggan, a grazing station far up on the Gairn, there happened to be a penny wedding, to which assembled two or three hundred men, contributed in nearly equal numbers by Deeside and Donside. Their ostensible object was social enjoyment, but the real object of the meeting was to put to the proof *à outrance*, which district produced the best men, if it was necessary to draw a distinction between these two objects. Each party was led on by its own champion ; the Donside people by Finla MacHardy,* Dalgargie, and the Deeside men by Alexander Davidson. There had never been such a tournament as this in the memory of the oldest man ; and it is still spoken of, though nearly a hundred years have gathered their mists around it, as "the great fecht at Ruibalchlaggan." Davidson performed prodigies in the *mêlée*, but was, it has been said, surrounded in a quiet way, sometime after the contest had been decided, and got his strong skull so injured that he came home, lingered for a few months, and then died, leaving a widow with two sons and two daughters to bewail the barbarous custom of the times, which had deprived them of that life on which they depended for support.

The day on which his remains were conveyed to the family burying ground in the churchyard of Glenmuick, was so remarkable for the depth of snow on the ground that tradition still signalizes it as "the day of the great storm." Yet, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather, three hundred men from Crathie turned out to do honour to the shade of their hero, and conduct his remains to their last

* Of the ancestors of Finla MacHardy, see a good story recorded in the *Donean Tourist*, page 36.

resting place. When the procession had advanced a little beyond Corbieha', a hamlet about a mile below Abergeldie, the men deposited the coffin on the snow, and sat down to rest and have some refreshments—a dram, to wit. Perhaps they had been a little too free with the dram ; at all events, it was deemed unbecoming for the funeral of such a man to pass over without a fight, and a fight too, worthy of the occasion. They accordingly set to, and nearly ended by doing by the coffin, what was done by “Lady Jane’s,” as recorded in Dean Ramsay’s *Reminiscences*, going to the churchyard without it.

CHAPTER XXI



IF such ancestors as are described in the previous chapter was descended the last of the old poachers. Though little is known of his boyhood, he early began to display a touch of that chivalrous and generous nature for which he was afterwards distinguished, as well as a contempt for walking in the paths usually trodden by humanity, for which he was still more remarkable. An incident is recorded of his early manhood, which made people apply to him the old saying, "Sic like father, sic like son." There were in those times, and even down to a year ago, when the present Chancellor of the Exchequer's gun tax put a stop to them, shooting matches at which each competitor contributed a certain sum, and the money so collected was given in prizes to the best shots, or more frequently in the olden time expended in the purchase of articles of various kinds that some poor man had made for the occasion, which articles then constituted the prizes.

Sandy had been at one of these, probably one of his first appearances on such occasions. The prizes were to be "cogs" made by some poor cooper, to earn a little money thereby. He had won a large number of the cogs; but instead of carrying them home in triumph, he set to toss them up in the air, and shot balls into them. After thus destroying his own, he turned round, and seeing a young

fellow looking with blank astonishment at such a proceeding, offered to purchase the few he had won. The offer being accepted, he treated them in the same manner; and handing the young man something to drink his health with, remarked, "If all the cogs were to be done that with, the poor man we have been helping to-day would get more work."

About the time Sandy attained manhood, the most stirring gentleman on Deeside was Lord Kennedy, son of the Earl of Cassillis. This young nobleman was devoted to sporting of all kinds, and along with Mr. Farquharson of Finzean and two or three more of like disposition, led a very fast life. The party had shootings in various parts of the Highlands, but their principal quarters were at Falar, a deer forest and grouse shooting near the sources of the Tilt. Sandy's first engagement was as gamekeeper to his lordship at this place; but he did not remain long in their service, being "disgusted," as he often said, "at the fast and godless life led by his employer and party."

The Duke of Atholl, from whom the shootings were rented, had found it necessary to put certain restrictions on the party which were considered vexatious and oppressive. This roused their ire, till the feeling between them ran so high that one day when passing Blair Castle and seeing the Duke sitting in front of his mansion, Lord Kennedy, probably in jest, though it was not so understood, said to Sandy, "Now, Sandy, if you go and shoot that man, I will give you five hundred pounds."

"Though your lordship would give me five thousand pounds, I would not do it," replied Sandy, manfully; "for I have a soul to be saved as well as your lordship."

His spirit was not of a temper to endure gentlemen's service, even under the most favourable conditions, having

frequently been heard to remark, "Sooner than be in any way a flunkey, I'd rather go and beg." But especially odious to him was the service of such a man as Lord Kennedy, since to the degradation of the position must be added the shock his religious feelings often experienced through the life led by the party, especially through their profanation of the Sabbath, a day always held in high esteem by Sandy. His master insisted that he should go out with him and his companions to shoot on that, as well as on other days ; and Sandy's stout resistance to such an order was probably the reason of his giving up his situation. The party, however, often went without him ; and when they did not go, they betook themselves to other sports, equally offensive to Sandy's feelings, such as playing cards and shooting at targets. Sometimes they would lie on their backs and shoot their rifles sheer up into the air, to test the truth of the natural law that a bullet so shot will come right down again. This practice Sandy used to denounce as "not only a violation of the Lord's day, but a tempting of Providence as well."

At this period of his life he was a money-making man ; and though he attended the balls and other merry-makings in his neighbourhood, he did not acquire the too common habit of excessive drinking, which is all the more to his credit, as he was "much taken out at them."

Smuggling was then the ordinary means resorted to, to earn a little spare cash. There were, however, two departments in the illicit trade, one the production of the whisky, in which the population generally, both male and female, engaged ; the other the transportation of the manufactured article to market in the large towns, which, though more perilous, was also perhaps more lucrative than the other ; but it required more daring and caution in those who embarked

in it. It was to this branch of the traffic that Sandy gave his attention; and in conducting it had many a hairbreadth escape, and many a brush with the gaugers, even, it is said, encountering the dreaded Gillespie himself.

He was now in his prime; and his personal appearance was so remarkable that the writer remembers well how, when a boy, he and his playfellows used to gaze upon it with admiration. Yet it was not for any gigantic proportions his frame exhibited—he was only 5 feet 11 inches in height—nor yet for the idea of strength and muscular power it displayed, though that was striking, but for its wonderful symmetry of mould, and the noble bearing and lordly demeanour of the owner. How we used to steal up to where he might be sitting or standing, that we might enjoy the feeling of wonder which an inspection of his leg was always sure to inspire! It measured 17 inches round the calf,* and yet, was so neat and “clean in the bone,” that he could clasp it at the ankle with his hand. We knew by inquiry—it was a matter on which we had a craving for the fullest and most exact information—the length of his foot, the girth and length of his arms, his breadth between the shoulders, and his girth round the waist; in short, the exact measurements of his frame were to us matters of great importance, because they formed in our opinion the standards by which to estimate the perfection of other human forms. Add to this physical development a face so finely chiselled that it might have formed a model for Grecian statuary, a luxuriant, jet black beard and moustache, thick curly hair of the same colour, a dark hazel eye with an eagle glance, and we have a pretty

* W. McCombie Smith in his “Romance of Poaching” says that Robert Dinnie, father of Donald Dinnie, the athlete, told him that Davidson and he had measured legs, and that each was 18 inches round the calf.—D.

correct idea of the *personnel* of the last, if not also the best, of the old poachers.

Sandy had too much sense to be vain of his personal appearance, but he cannot be acquitted of a consciousness that nature had cast his frame in her finest mould, and that it was his duty to invest it with suitable and becoming setting. He was therefore almost always clad in the garb of Old Gaul, which he had also strong patriotic reasons for wearing. His step was singularly elastic, and his movement when walking so light and graceful, that it might have served as a model to lady students of calisthenics. To the same feeling is probably to be ascribed the style he adopted in conversation. His mother tongue was Gaelic, which he used on all suitable occasions. When, however, this was unsuitable, he adopted pure English, which he spoke with the ease and accent of a real English gentleman. He never spoke Scotch, and seldom did a Scotch word escape his lips, and when it did, it was always tinged with an English accent.

The Forest of Mar, which anciently filled both sides of the valley of the Dee, from Mar Lodge upwards to the slopes of Cairntoul and Braeriach, with the tributary glens of the Lui and the Derry, had been much reduced in its vast extent since the time when John Erskine, Earl of Mar, assembled on its confines the chiefs of twenty powerful clans with their followers to waken its echoes with the sound of the huntsman's horn, and then to march at their head to place the "auld Stuarts" on the throne of the three kingdoms. But there was still a large quantity of valuable timber in these glens, especially the Derry, which the late Earl of Fife desired to turn to cash, and accordingly offered it for sale. Sandy Davidson, having made a considerable sum of money by the illicit traffic in which he had been engaged, turned his attention to this new speculation, after the smuggling days

were ended, and became an extensive purchaser of wood in the Derry. This was a speculation that had many attractions for him ; it afforded him excitement, which seemed to be the greatest craving of his nature, and gave ample scope for daring and adventurous action.

Glen Derry, whose deep recesses were then known only to a few natives of Braemar, and a still fewer number of drovers, who, in the prosecution of their calling, found it sometimes necessary to traverse its lone solitudes, and brave the difficulties and dangers of the Larig Gru, is now familiar to a host of tourists, who annually visit the wild scenery of Locha'an or ascend the heights of Ben Muicdhui. This glen is perhaps above all others on Deeside interesting to the geologist, containing as it does the most evident and probably the most recent manifestations of glacial action to be found in Scotland. If the tourist has ever seen the Mer de Glace, he will have little difficulty in picturing to himself a miniature of it in Glen Derry ; a great ice tributary with a grand cascade like the Talèfre flowing down from Loch Etchachan, uniting in the valley below with the greater arm, resembling the Glacier du Géant, from the summit of the Larig Gru, and moving on its slow but resistless course as far as the mouth of the valley. It was probably this very glen that sheltered the last glacier in the British Isles ; and certainly about a mile above its opening into Glenlui are to be seen some very manifest and undisturbed specimens of terminal moraines. Here we may suppose the ice made its final stand as a glacier, here deposited its last burden, and here expired, bravely fighting against the forces of a hostile climate.

Sandy Davidson was no geologist, and did not visit Glen Derry for the purpose of making observations on glacial action, but of purchasing Scotch fir from the Earl of Fife, and bring it to market in Aberdeen. He accordingly took

advantage of these terminal moraines, to construct a dam of sufficient size to make a large lake in a long hollow which the ice had scooped out behind them, and thus give him water power to float his timber to the Dee. He had a number of men employed under him, all bold, daring fellows. None other would have been of any use, for the work they were engaged in was of the most dangerous description. As director of such a band, Sandy was in his true element. Sometimes the logs would get entangled on a rock, and so become matted together in great heaps, rising and falling with the water, and blocking up the river. This the floaters called a cairn. To disentangle them it was necessary to venture in upon the cairn when the river was in flood; and endeavour by means of strong crowbars to loosen the trees one by one. It was necessary also to take the greatest care that the whole mass should not get free at once; because, should this happen, certain death awaited every man who might then be on the cairn. In these perilous operations, Sandy would always be found at the post of greatest danger, and earned for himself the reputation of being the king of waders. Notwithstanding all the precautions used, these hazardous operations were not completed without loss of life; but the wonder is that so few fatal accidents occurred, considering the foolhardy risks run by these reckless men, often, it is to be feared, steeling themselves against a sense of danger by potations that rendered them less able to effect an escape when any unforeseen mishap arose.

It would be endless to recount the feats of daring which Sandy performed, and the hair-breadth escapes he made during his floating days. It will be enough to mention an episode, as illustrative of his character, and of that of the men who were engaged with him. He had, unfortunately,

thus early fallen under the suspicion of being an occasional poacher in the Invercauld forests. The factor on the estate, Mr. Roy, had accordingly put him under ban of house and hauld, with the view of driving him from the country. It is probable that Sandy was not quite guiltless. He was too good a shot not to hanker after the sport which his gun afforded him, and too fond of excitement calmly to calculate the consequences to his temporal interests; for morally he held he was entitled to the indulgence. Mr. Roy's action in the matter wounded him deeply; he resented what he deemed his tyranny, and took revenge by more frequently invading the forest than he might otherwise have done. That he was now an extensive contractor in the interest of the Earl of Fife had no tendency to mollify the feeling of hostility entertained towards him by the factor to the neighbouring chief, but rather tended to make him the reverse of accommodating to the floaters.

A little beyond the bridge of Invercauld, and in view of the mansion house, there was in the channel of the river a large fragment of rock, highly prized by the proprietor for its picturesque appearance, and as affording harbourage to salmon, but very obnoxious to the floaters, as it caught their logs in a part of the river where, on account of the dangerous rapids with which it was surrounded, it was impossible to reach them when the river was in floating condition. A huge cairn had collected on the summit of this rock, designated the "big stane o' the Cluny," and all efforts to move the logs and cause them to pursue their journey had been unavailing. When the river was high they could not be reached, and when low they were too firmly matted together and too heavy for human effort to produce much impression. The floaters therefore resolved to blast the obstructing rock, so that, when the next flood came, the

whole cairn would be carried clear over the top of it. To this work they addressed themselves without leave asked of the factor, whose permission they knew they had no reason to expect. Could it have been accomplished in the course of one night, it would have been done without his knowledge ; but he had a sharp eye on these wild fellows, and learning early in the morning what had been going on while he slept, he lost no time in interposing his authority to stop the destruction of the favourite "salmon rock." An altercation took place, in which personal violence was threatened to the factor if he did not desist from his vexatious visits, and defiance was hurled in his face. An interdict was procured from the Sheriff of the County, but there was some difficulty experienced in serving it, and it too was set at defiance. Meanwhile the floaters had become desperate, and a plot was formed among some of the more lawless that, should Mr. Roy and his myrmidons dare to come on the cairn "he should be thrown into the river, sink or swim." An insecure temporary gangway of logs had been constructed to afford a passage from the bank to the cairn, and it was planned that should Mr. Roy venture to come on this gangway, the log should be slipped, and he should be left to his fate. Sandy Davidson was no party to this murderous plot, but he had heard of it and resolved to frustrate it, though the intended victim was the man who had exercised towards him every species of persecution in his power. He took care, therefore, to be on the cairn next day, when the factor's visit was expected. The river had risen overnight and was in a very dangerous condition. When the factor, attended by a few followers, appeared in the distance, Sandy heard one of the men, not one of his company, swear that if the "tyrant" should come on the bridge he would never go back. He remonstrated against any personal violence being offered to

him, however tyrannical he might be, but all to no purpose. Mr. Roy, on reaching the bank, determined, against the advice of those who were with him, at once to cross to the cairn. Sandy, observing his intention, bawled out in a voice that rose shrill over the roar of the stream—

“Don’t come, Mr. Roy ; your life is in danger.”

“I’ll take my chance of that,” replied the courageous factor, and continued to advance, cautiously balancing himself on the unsteady logs.

“For God’s sake and your wife’s, if not for your own,” cried Sandy, “don’t venture on the cairn.”

But by this time Mr. Roy was midway across, with the foaming torrent beneath him.

“Slip the log,” said the leader in the plot, and suiting the action to the word, set his spoke in rest to hitch it off.

“On your life, don’t,” interposed Sandy, endeavouring to push the man from his rash act. But finding that he was not supported by the other men, he leaped on the gangway, caught Mr. Roy in his arms, and by superior strength bore him safe to the bank. In another second the fabric swept down the river.

Whatever may be thought of Mr. Roy’s want of gratitude for his kindly act, there is but one opinion about Sandy’s conduct in sinking all differences, and braving all dangers to save the life of the man who had endeavoured by harsh means to drive him from the country. As a Justice of Peace, and as factor to an employer in whose eyes poaching was an unpardonable offence, Mr. Roy was justified in taking the most vigorous measures to prevent the destruction of his master’s property ; and even, on finding that the usual legal steps were unavailing, in calling in the aid of the military to enforce the authority of the law ; but he might have dealt a little more leniently with Sandy afterwards, without violating any part of his duty.

This floating business was the ruin of Sandy. The speculation proved unprofitable. The cost of conveying the heavy timber of Glen Derry 70 miles to market in Aberdeen far exceeded his calculation ; and to put the cope-stone on his misfortune, he had re-sold to the Earl of Fife two hundred pounds' worth of timber, the cutting down of which his lordship thought would be destructive of the amenities of Mar Lodge, soon after which the Earl became bankrupt, leaving poor Sandy unpaid and without any acknowledgment of the debt. When Sandy would be asked, "How were you so simple as to trust the Earl, when a report that he was on the point of failure was current?" he would reply with a degree of surprise at the question, "What ! not trust a Lord of the Re-alm?" pronouncing the word in two syllables to give it more importance.

CHAPTER XXII



FROM this date Sandy ceased to be like other men, or to walk in their ways, and however little sympathy we may have for the course of life he adopted, we cannot withhold some meed of admiration for the character of one who, though exposed to the demoralizing influences of a lawless and unsettled avocation, never lost his native simplicity and generosity, or sank his respect for the dictates of morality and religion. Sandy now took professionally to the *bag and the gun*, and for twenty years led a roaming kind of life, having his home nowhere but everywhere. From March to November he seldom sought the shelter of a house to pass the night, preferring the grassy banks of the Dee or the Spey, or, what was to him more delightful still, the “bonnie blooming heather” of the mountains. This was of choice and not necessity. He was well known over the greater part of the Highlands, both among gentle and simple; and all who knew him would have been glad to have given him any comfort they had to bestow. The halls of noblemen and gentlemen were open to him at any time, and no poor man’s door would be shut if he requested admission. But he had a contempt for luxury. “No bed for me,” he would say, if he observed any preparations with that view, where he might make a call, wet, and probably hungry, after a day’s

fishing—"No bed for me, they are but soft fellows that go to bed in summer." It may illustrate what poor shifts he would be content with, as well as the generous impulses that governed his actions, to relate here an incident that came within the writer's knowledge.

Mr. Roy, the factor on the Invercauld Estates, already mentioned, having been informed that one of his tenants, an old acquaintance, if not also a distant relation, of Sandy, was in the way of occasionally affording him shelter, and ministering to his wants, took the farmer severely to task for his conduct, and threatened him with expulsion from the estate if he again admitted under his roof the detested poacher. It happened that soon after this Sandy in the course of his peregrinations had arranged to pass the night, a very stormy night in winter, at his friend's house; but learning on his way thither what had taken place, and not knowing where else to go for that night, chose rather than bring trouble on any man to turn into an open shed, and take what shelter it afforded. Late in the evening, a lad was sent out to the shed for some fuel, the storm and drift being considered too wild for the female servants to face. In groping about under the snow-drift for the peats he was in search of, his hand alighted on Sandy's beard; and the exclamation of terror and surprise which he uttered awoke the sleeper. Recognizing Sandy's voice, the lad insisted that he should come into the house. He gave some lame reason for declining to accept the invitation, saying that he wished to be at such a place by day-break and couldn't stay all night; and made him promise not to tell his father that he was there, and he would rest for half-an-hour and then be off. Guessing the real reason, the lad argued that nobody could know of his having been in the house that night, and he need have no scruples about coming in. It was to no

purpose; Sandy's chivalrous determination that no one should suffer or run any risk of suffering loss on his account overcame all entreaty, and the lad was constrained to depart without him. But a few minutes' reflection convinced him that his conduct in keeping silence was neither brave nor generous; and he accordingly told his father, and both sallied forth to bring in the poor wanderer, but he was gone; and the drifting snow had filled up the footmarks. They called loudly and long, but no answer was returned; and where Sandy spent that and many a similar night, none knew but himself, for he had a repugnance to recount what hardships he endured. In the morning, however, a hare was found in the shed, left by Sandy as compensation for the miserable shelter it had afforded him, or rather as an expression of his goodwill to the family.

He invariably devoted the month of March to fishing. His mode of prosecuting the sport few would care to imitate. He knew all the pools and parts of the pools, both on Dee and Spey, where the fish were likely to be met with at any particular season or condition of the river; and to get at that part, no matter how bitterly cold the weather might be, he walked straight in, often till nothing was to be seen of him above the water but his head and shoulders. There he would remain plying the gentle art, until he had either hooked his fish, or satisfied himself that it would not be forthcoming. After a day so spent, it was his usual custom, when the winds were very piercing, to make his way to the house of some friend, and after steaming himself over the kitchen fire for half an hour or so, turn out to the barn, throw himself down, wet clothes and all, among the straw, and take his chance of what sleep might fall to his lot till morning, when he would be early astir to go through the same privations again in some other district.

In the matter of clothing he was equally hardy. Those who knew him will remember the thin tartan coat, the thinner tartan trousers, with no under clothing save a cotton shirt, and the unsubstantial Forfar pumps, which formed his winter's attire. The only change he made in summer was the substitution of a kilt for the trousers. If any one suggested something more warm and comfortable, his usual remark was—"No, no, people kill themselves wearing too many clothes." He never paid anything for washing, that is, he never had any article of wearing apparel washed, and yet he was of very tidy habits, even, it must be owned, fond of being smartly dressed. When therefore, a shirt appeared to him to be losing its respectability, he would make it in his way to pass some shop where a new one could be purchased, dressed and ready. This he would carry with him to some lonely and rugged corry on the mountains, or sylvan retreat by the river, where he could make the transfer, and leave the discarded article to be washed and bleached by a purely natural process, but never to be worn again by him. Though he had nothing of the fop in his nature, it must be owned that he had something akin to a child's pleasure in seeing himself smartly dressed after his own style. When he got a new shirt that pleased him particularly well, it was no unusual thing to find his coat wrists turned up a bit, and his vest laid open an extra button or two to display its graces, while furtive glances of satisfaction were occasionally cast by the wearer at both localities. Alas! he ought to be forgiven for this apparent vanity, for in his latter days the opportunities of indulging it had become somewhat rare.

Of his peculiarities of mind the most striking were his feeling of reverence, and keen perception, and unbounded admiration, of whatever was great and grand. These might be traced in all his sentiments and opinions. "His deep and

sacred regard for the name of God," says one who knew him intimately for many years, "was such, that I have never known him profane the sacred majesty of heaven by an irreverent use of his Maker's name. That name he never took in vain, unless he were in the heat of some violent passion, and even then it was very seldom he did so, and on cooling down, deeply regretted he had done it. The condition of his clothing often prevented him from attending church, especially in his later years; but as Sunday came round, he invariably took a Bible or a volume of sermons and went to worship in some quiet spot in the great temple of nature. I have never known another man who had the same amount of awe and holy dread cast over his mind as Sandy, when brought into contact with the wild and grand in nature. The terrible loneliness, and huge massiveness of Ben Muicdhui brought a tremor over his mind, as it suggested to him that passage in the Revelations, where sinners are spoken of as calling on the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb. 'We cannot,' I have heard Sandy say, 'have any idea of a sinner's fear on the day of judgment, when it is such that he will call on these terrible rocks to fall on him. In a moment an army would be destroyed were it even hurled over them. It makes one's mind recoil with horror at the idea of falling over them, going down, down, down.'"

"A thunder storm too," continues the same acquaintance, "had an overpowering and hallowing influence on his susceptible mind. I remember once meeting him on his way from Benavon, where he had been during an extraordinary thunderstorm. He was literally shaking with sensation. It was not fear, but that sort of holy awe which pious persons sometimes feel when they are, it may be, on the brink of eternity.

“‘I would not have missed,’ said he, ‘being on Benavon to-day for five pounds: the thunder was so majestic and awful among the rocks. It produced in my mind a fear of God’s greatness and might nothing else could. I tremble yet at His terrible power who could have hurled me to destruction in a moment with one of the smallest of these flashes of lightning. But he preserved me safe in the midst of it, giving me time for repentance; and I am not without hope, however small, that he has some love for me when he did not crush me in yon terrible place this day.’”*

* On 28th July, 1852, the writer, happening to be on this same mountain, though for a very different purpose from poor Sandy’s, was caught in a thunderstorm of such sublimity that the whole scene is even yet fresh in his memory. The following short note was made soon after the occasion: A little before noon, after having well filled a botanical case with small cairngorms, and other treasures of the mountain, I was standing on one of those huge excrescences of rock that extrude like great moles on the brow of Benavon and distinguish it to the distant beholder from the surrounding mountains. The day was moderately calm, and the sky, though not free from some ominous looking clouds, was very transparent, affording a fine and extensive view to the north and east. Suddenly a little cloud showed front over the north shoulder of Braeriach. On it came through the *glack* between Ben Muicdhuì and Cairngorm, increasing in magnitude and darkening in aspect. It descended into the hollow of Loch Avon, and I could see the summit of Cairngorm over its upper surface. There it twisted and boiled in a most wonderful manner, while the lightnings glared amid its murky folds with a peculiar red colour, and the thunder reverberated among the rocks incessantly. On it came down the deep valley of the Avon, till almost under my feet I could see the lightning playing through the cloud beneath me. I had heard of such sights before, but though I had wandered among the mountains since ever I could wander at all, I had never seen one till now; and I recollected the lines of Byron descriptive of such a scene—

“When I roved a young Highlander o’er the dark heath,
“And climbed thy steep summit, oh Morven of snow!
“To gaze on the torrent that thundered beneath,
“Or the mist of the tempest that gathered below.”

Not a drop of rain fell where I was—some 3,800 feet above sea level—but in the valley below, I have little doubt, it fell in torrents. The cloud passed away in the direction of Inchrory, but its culminating grandeur to me was gone, and I set off for Benabour, thankful for the magnificent spectacle I had beheld.

Sandy could not endure to observe people other than serious when the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed. To their philosophical arguments as to their safety he would answer with impatience—"Why, what's the good of your reasoning? Though only one person may be killed, what does that matter to you, if you be the man?"

Though one might have thought that his living day and night among the grand and solitary in nature for so many years would have blunted his susceptibility of receiving impressions from them, yet it was not so. His feelings were as keen for realising the grandeur of a waterfall and the sublimity of a great mountain at the day of his death as when he was young.

It was this same feeling of veneration for all that was entitled to respect that made him sometimes appear severe to conceited young people when more talkative than he deemed respectful in the presence of their seniors. "Hold your tongue, you brat; you speak like a powder monkey," was his usual rebuke on such occasions.

He was at war also with several of the habits of luxury and effeminacy that he accounted innovations on the good old modes of living. The use of tobacco as an article of luxury, and of pork as an article of diet was particularly offensive to him. "Tobacco smokers and pork eaters I abhor," he would say in his own proud way; but it was the practices and not the practisers that he despised. These peculiarities of taste showed how thoroughly Scotch he was. On this point it will not be irrelevant to adduce the authority of Sir Walter Scott, who thought it necessary to explain the absence of pork at the great feast at Glennaquoick by the following note:

"Pork, or swine's flesh, in any shape, was till of late years much abominated by the Scotch, nor is it yet a favourite food

amongst them. King Jamie carried this prejudice to England, and is known to have abhorred pork almost as much as he did tobacco. Ben Jonson has recorded this peculiarity, where the gipsy in a masque, examining the King's hand, says,—

‘You should by this line
Love a horse and a hound, but no part of a swine.’

The Gipsies Metamorphosed.

James's own proposed banquet for the Devil was a loin of pork and a poll of ling, with a pipe of tobacco for digestion.”

For any difference in their tastes King Jamie and Sandy might have dined together every day in the year.

In politics Sandy was a Tory to the heart's core. The principles on which the two great parties of the state were divided he probably had not studied theoretically. It was enough for him to observe the practices which as individuals in a private capacity they followed. On that he founded his politics ; and as might be supposed, his opinions were strong, and strongly expressed. He did nothing by halves, least of all did he hold opinions so. With him it was no case of agreeing with this man and disagreeing with that ; it was simple loving and hating.

Happening to be present on one occasion when politics formed the subject of discussion among some friends, Sandy listened for a little to the arguments used by the champion of the Whig cause ; and, having caught their gist, abruptly broke in, “What a fool you are to allow yourself to be duped in that manner ! The Whigs are not the poor man's friend. They are made up of high promises to the poor, but it is the Tories who practise them. The Whigs, on the other side, practise every villainy and meanness, pouring the woes of sour-milk persecution on those below them. They have no veneration for anything human, and end too often by disbelieving everything divine.”

When he had denounced a nobleman as a Whig, he had emptied upon him the vials of his utmost contempt. After that there was nothing more to be said ; there was no lower depth into which he could be flung. It must be admitted that the treatment he personally received at the hands of certain gentlemen may have had some influence in swaying his politics ; but no man had a keener perception, or a higher appreciation of noble and generous features of character ; and with whomsoever these were found, to them, man or party, he ascribed all the virtues, political among the rest. He was besides drawn towards the Tories by the reverence of his nature for any institution or custom hallowed by age, or enshrined in the affections of the people.

His love of freedom was his ruling passion. It probably drove him from earning his living after the manner of other men ; for he could not endure to be bound to work or to follow any course of action whatever if his inclination did not lead him to it. The very idea of imprisonment was torture to him. He had often been heard to say—" Before I would be a month in jail I would give five hundred pounds of the hardest earned money I ever had for liberty to get my feet on the heather again." He had, however, one night's experience of this hated place, but it was not on account of poaching, but for a debt alleged to have been due by him arising out of some transaction regarding the purchase of wood.

Sandy's mode of conducting business was far enough from being in accordance with the rules now universally adopted, but like many other traits of his character it faithfully reflected that of his countrymen before they were corrupted by the introduction among them of a system that appealed less to personal virtue than to the observance of

legal forms.* To ask a man for a receipt or an acknowledgment of payment was in his opinion to cast a doubt upon his honour. "A man's word is his honour," was a favourite maxim with him, and he had not that respect for the law and lawyers that would lead him to look for justice in a court of law, if it were denied him at the hands of a private individual. The loss he suffered at the time of the Earl of Fife's bankruptcy, from this style of conducting business, has already been noticed. That was a case, however, in which it may be safely affirmed his noble debtor would have afterwards done him justice had it been in his power; but there were others in which those who owed him money denied their debt designedly, knowing well that Sandy would not prosecute. He was himself entirely governed by his high sense of honour, and he could not understand why any other safeguard against unjust dealing was required. Only experience taught him that there were a few mean people who did not value their word of honour, and whose proper punishment in his estimation was, not to raise an action against them at law, but "to hound them from society." Some dealings with one of this fraternity in the days when he traded in wood, resulted in Sandy being brought into a Court of Law, where an adverse decision on some technical point was given against him. He had relied on the justice of his case to carry him

*General Stewart has recorded the following instance of the regard paid by the Highlanders to such engagements: "A gentleman of the name of Stewart agreed to lend a considerable sum of money to a neighbour. When they met and the money was already counted down upon the table, the borrower offered a receipt. As soon as the lender (Stewart of Ballachulish) heard this he immediately collected the money, saying that a man who could not trust his own word without a bond, should not be trusted by him and should have none of his money, which he put up in his purse and returned home."

through, but finding that it was no match for the craft of his prosecutor in the arena into which he had been dragged, he resolved to balk him of the money which he was unjustly suing him for, by going to prison for a time. But one night there entirely altered his resolution. His own account of his experience is the best that can be given—"No sooner was the door locked upon me than I felt myself nearly going mad; and all the night through instead of sleeping I kept thinking, if I had not the money to take me out, my reason must give away. In the morning I paid the one hundred pounds without thinking of the unfair play I had got, and immediately set out for the hills; and such was the state of my mind that I never was satisfied I was free till I got my feet on the heather moors again."

Reference has already been made to Sandy's attainments as a dancer, but a triumph which he achieved in this line requires still to be noticed; and when it is known that he had never been taught the art but possessed it as a pure gift from nature, his success will appear all the more marvellous.

At a meeting of the Caledonian Hunt in Edinburgh, it was resolved to give a number of prizes for the encouragement of Highland games and accomplishments, among others one for dancing. The Highland gentlemen, members of the society, were ambitious of the honour of producing from their estates the winners of the prizes, and accordingly brought with them on the day of trial such of their retainers or tenants as they deemed likely to be successful competitors. There were thus assembled in Edinburgh, from all parts, the best men the country could produce. Sandy presented himself among the rest, though under the patronage of no superior. So

great was the number entered for the prize in dancing that the competition extended over sixteen evenings, each succeeding trial however diminishing the list; and finally the first prize was awarded to Sandy. Though very averse to talk about his actions, he was proud of being considered the first dancer in Scotland, and could be got to give an account of the "great competition in Edinburgh."

"Though I had good hope," he would say, "after the first day's trial, of being the successful man, it was not till I got up to dance for the last time, that the great cheering of the ladies and gentlemen made me certain that I was the lucky man; but I sprained my thumb 'cracking,' and it has never been quite right since."

"As a dancer," says one who has had good opportunities of judging, "he was incomparably the most graceful of his own time; and his style was more characteristically Highland than any I have ever seen; while his fine personal appearance, lit up by the sparkle of his bright piercing eye, never shone to better advantage than when he became excited in a Highland reel."

His victory in Edinburgh, though it could scarcely have increased his celebrity on Deeside, spread his fame into other parts, so that, wherever he went, he was the hero of the ball-room; and it must be admitted that he had no disposition to hide his talent in the earth. He was so fond of this pastime that when opportunities were long wanting for its indulgence, he would sometimes organise on his own account a ball, paying the whole costs, for this among other reasons, "that he might get a right hearty dance."

CHAPTER XXIII



AS a poacher, Sandy was as systematic in his operations as any farmer. Early in the spring he would provide himself with rod, bag, and gaff, and set out for the most likely place to find fish. He recognised the validity of the law which enjoined a close time in both fishing and fowling. "Yes," he would say, when questioned on this subject, "Yes, it is right that there should be a close time, though the day fixed on by the law is arbitrary. It depends upon the season; but I suppose some day must be chosen, and the law is not far wrong. 'There or there about,' is what nature says." As soon then as close time had expired Sandy was in the field, equipped for work as above noted; and dressed in tartan coat and trews, with white felt hat, he looked as smart as any gentleman in the land, and indeed by those who did not know him, he would be certain to be taken for the landlord of the property on which he might be found. Poaching, as now practised, is so associated with ruffianism and crime, that it appears almost unfair to apply the term to Sandy's high style of doing the thing. He was more like the "free forester" of the olden time, claiming the privilege he exercised as the unalienable right of a free born Scot.

Limited only by his own desires, his field of operations was very extensive. One day he might be seen with his dog

Charlie—a little brown spotted setter—crouching close at his heels, and his white felt hat all stuck over with hooks and other fishing tackle, plying the rod on the banks of Dee at the Craggandoun, four miles above Balmoral, and the following day lashing in the same style the salmon pools on the Ballogie water thirty miles lower down the river; while a day or two after would find him similarly engaged on the Spey at Carron or Aviemore.

As an angler, he was perhaps less successful than as a sportsman in any other line; yet considering the wretched trim in which he kept his fishing gear, the bags he made were wonderful. His rod, a few days after purchase, would be found tied round at some ugly break with the coarsest whip cord, while line, reel and hooks were subjected to the worst of usage and the least of attention. In fact he thought everything he handled ought to be like himself, capable of sustaining any treatment however bad.

How he passed the first month or two of the fishing season has already been noticed. With the advent of spring weather in April, Sandy renounced the luxury of lying down in wet clothes among the straw in some friend's barn, and sought no other comfort for the night than what nature supplied on the grassy bank of the rolling river,

“Lulled to sleep by the rush of the stream,
And gently awaked by the early beam.”

In this manner the months of April and May were generally passed. There were occasional interruptions. When the produce of his labours had lined his pockets, he would spend a week or so among the haunts of his fellow mortals, “enjoying good company,” as he used to express it. His fondness for high life in his own way was the great weakness of his character, and probably did more to injure his health than the privations he suffered by flood and field.

By and bye as June wore on, and the season for angling as a remunerative employment was passing away, Sandy would be taking an occasional turn into the forest to ascertain if the stags and the "yell" hinds were coming into condition. When he was satisfied that there were in some favoured glens "good animals"—animals that would command attention in Leadenhall—he would look out the rifle, which he had thrown aside in Banchory, Dufftown, or some other place he was in the way of making his headquarters at the close of the previous season, and which he would now find all covered over with rust and in a sad state of disrepair. The rod was now cast aside, as if he was never to look at it again, and the rifle, put into as good order as was thought necessary, was laid hold of. He now disappeared from the habitations of man, taking with him by way of provisions, a "pocket pistol," well filled, and a "whisky buckie"—a compound of whisky and oatmeal rolled together like a great pill of two or three pounds' weight, in fact "Atholl brose" of portable consistence. Several days would elapse before he would again be seen or heard of; but some early morning he would appear, bearing on his shoulders two huge venison haunches which he had probably carried a distance of seven or eight miles during the night.

A few days after these had been despatched to Leadenhall, Sandy would be found, like a prince, at some favourite hotel, surrounded by a gang of harpies who had smelt the game, and practising on their victim's weakness for "good company," endeavoured to supply that commodity in return for the "treat" which they knew he would bestow in the most lordly manner. While the price of his haunches lasted, ball and revel were the order of things; and high and fast life went on for some time.

Not, however, on every occasion that he received money from the great London market did Sandy spend it in this foolish and reckless manner. It only so happened when he had the misfortune to fall into the trap laid for him by some worthless and designing loafers, that too often dogged his steps. At other times he would husband his money almost with miser care, and these were so much more frequent than those of a prodigal expenditure that he was seldom without as much as served his needs, after handsome donations to his poor relatives—a duty which he never neglected when he had the means of discharging it.

“When again in want of money, Sandy would prepare for another expedition, taking the precaution, however, to select a different forest. He had several reasons for so acting, among others a desire not to be too hard on any one, unless indeed he bore a grudge to the owner for some act of severity towards himself which he not unfrequently took this way of avenging, but generally from prudential motives, afraid lest the fact of the former inroad should have got wind, or the deer’s “grealach” (inside) might have by some chance been discovered by the keepers who would then be doubly on the alert, or that some one of the many accidents by which murder will be out might render a second visit after so short a time unsafe.”

While poaching for deer he was very seldom detected or caught. This was partly owing to his caution. From long habit he had acquired the art of keeping such a sharp lookout that it was almost impossible for a keeper to approach him unobserved. His piercing eye was continually on the watch for signs of danger as well as for game, both of which he had the faculty of discovering to a degree seldom, if ever, attained by any other man. Besides this, “he made so little noise in the forest,” as the keepers affirmed, “that it wisna

good fin'an' him oot." Sandy's aim was so true that a second shot was scarcely ever necessary to secure the game. Yet it was not steadiness but quickness of aim that signalized his shooting. He has often been surpassed at rifle practice at a target, but never at taking up a stag between the trees as it bounded through the forest. "I remember meeting him," says an old friend who was well acquainted with the character of his shooting, "one day soon after he had been in the forest, and he complained bitterly of himself for having missed two or three fine stags. 'Were they standing, Sandy?' said I. 'They were, James; and I believe that's how I missed them.' 'I think so,' said I, 'if you had got a glimpse of them bounding between the trees, there would have been another story to tell.'"

But he more frequently baffled the gamekeepers by the address with which he had concealed himself than in any other way. The writer has been told by the late John Bowman, gamekeeper in the Ballochbuie, that if he once lost sight of Sandy Davidson in the forest he could seldom find him out again; and those who remember old John will have little difficulty in believing that, if Sandy could elude him, he was pretty safe under similar conditions from the pursuit of any other keeper on Deeside.

Notwithstanding all his arts however, he was sometimes caught; but, unless under special circumstances, he was not informed upon. All that was generally exacted from him was a promise that he would not come back again within a certain time; and if once he pledged his word it might almost implicitly be relied upon. Such an engagement was, in Sandy's estimation, like a solemn truce between two armies. But though it was very seldom that he was brought before the Justices and fined for his poaching, he had a great horror of being caught, not so much because he accounted it



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a sort of military defeat, involving through the promise he was sure to have to make a cession of territory and a curtailment of privilege, as that it put the poor gamekeepers into a false position with their employers, and endangered their livelihood should it be discovered that they had not reported him. One instance of this kind deserves to be noticed, as it is highly honourable to Sandy :

A keeper one day by some unlucky chance came upon him, under circumstances when it was impossible for him not to report him to headquarters. He pointed out the circumstances to Sandy, remarking, "If I don't tell on you, my wife and family will be ruined."

"I would not have such a thing happen to a poor man on my account, no, not if the matter were to cost me one hundred pounds, instead of five. Go you and report me, and when I am summoned, I will appear and relieve you of danger," was Sandy's heroic answer. He was reported, and paid the fine ungrudgingly, and was a great friend to the keeper afterwards, frequently giving him small sums of money to assist him in bringing up his family, and abstaining from shooting on the ground over which he watched, lest any should represent his kindness as bribery.

Though he could be thus generous to a poor man acting openly in the discharge of his duty, he hated with a corresponding intensity sneaks and poltroons, and if they injured him he did not spare them when it was in his power to retaliate.

It happened once that Sandy had shot a fine stag in Glengelder, now a portion of the royal forest of Balmoral. At that time some change of gamekeepers was contemplated on the estate, and several persons were grasping at the situation and endeavouring to supplant each other. Finding the animal too heavy for his strength to remove it before morning he had engaged a man to bring a horse for that

purpose, describing to him where he would meet him at an hour which he appointed. The man came, but he had either misunderstood his instructions, or in the darkness failed to find the place, and though Sandy repeatedly fired his gun as a signal to attract his attention, it proved of no avail. On his way home the man was discovered on the highway by two of the candidates for the vacant situation, who had some temporary employment as watchers over the property, and guessing what errand he had been on, they so wrought on his fears that he told them all the circumstances. The result was that Sandy was summoned before Mr. Roy, factor on the Invercauld Estates, and the only Justice of the Peace then in the district, and fined the statutory penalty of £5. The factor, as a magistrate, was obliged to discharge this public duty, though he knew this was not the way to manage Sandy, for whose good qualities, notwithstanding that he hated his profession, he had in his private capacity a certain degree of respect. Sandy bore Mr. Roy no ill-will for the discharge of his duty, but for the "fool" who informed upon him, and especially the "sneaks" who had played upon his simplicity "to entrap a man unlawfully whom they had not the skill to convict by the means which the law permitted," he entertained the reverse of friendly feelings, putting himself to considerable trouble to poach on their beats, when he might have obtained his game more easily and safely elsewhere, and making no secret of his delight when some years afterwards they were dismissed from their situations.

It was when in pursuit of the deer that Sandy had to pass the dreariest and most lonesome time of all his poaching expeditions; and to a man tainted as he was with the superstitious notions of his day and class, it must, one would suppose, have been almost unendurable.

Leaving some distant village late in the afternoon, furnished with his rifle, powder and ball, pocket pistol, and "whisky buckie," he would set out for the forest in which he meant to try his luck. Long before he reached its confines he would strike off from the public road, and, after traversing twenty miles or more of rough trackless hill-ground in the dark, the dawn would find him concealed in some wild corry of the Ben Muicdhui range, watching the movements of the antlered herds that might be within eye-shot of him. There he would lie the whole day long—sleep, it is true, a considerable part of it—taking note at intervals of all that came within his ken, keepers' movements, as well as those of the deer. As evening drew on he would be very observant of the places to which the latter repaired for the night. He had studied their habits so long and so thoroughly that when he saw a herd lie down he could generally tell where they would be found at daybreak next morning; and thither he would convey himself in the darkness. He might, however, have several days to spend in this manner before he got his coveted shot, for deer were not so plentiful then as they are now in the corries of Ben Muicdhui. And how terrifically dreary and lonesome must have been the wakeful nights he passed in these wild regions, where even nature herself is most weird and preternatural! We are apt to suppose that superstitious beliefs fill the mind with unnatural fears, and perhaps so they do; but it would be an error to conclude that such beliefs make a coward of a man, or unfit him for braving any danger. It may be fairly doubted whether the most sceptical disciple of the materialistic school would not have been the subject of greater fear—fear of unknown danger, whether preternatural or not—at the dead hour of midnight, if placed among the yawning chasms and towering precipices of Ben Muicdhui, than Sandy Davidson, with all his superstitious beliefs.

One whose information has often been quoted in this sketch thus describes the condition of his mind: "Notwithstanding the eerie life he led among the hills at all hours, he never got above a belief in the preternatural—especially a belief in those merry gentry who are said to be clad in green. He once came from the Glenbeg forest, in the Braemar district, where he had been spending the night to have an early shot at a stag, declaring to me in solemn seriousness—'I have oftentimes had doubts about the fairies, but I heard them last night, as sure as I ever heard anything, singing and playing on the bag-pipes.' This he evidently believed, as he was above an untruth or a jest on such a subject, and besides was very grave and troubled-like in mind. But though he was superstitious from the training of the time, and the affair of the 'Black han' in particular, it never in the least prevented him from going at all hours into what many less brave would have thought the very jaws of death and destruction—the murky and dark forest, the eerie mountains, heightened in gloom and terror by the shade of the night, and the strange unearthly *souch* of the wind among their beetling crags."

As a variety, Sandy often intermitted his visits to the forest, in order to have a day or two at the "pouting" when the river was in condition—a sport of which he was passionately fond, and in the pursuit of which he had no equal. The testimony of one, well acquainted with his skill in the various branches of the line of life he led, is as follows—

"I have known several men more successful than Sandy Davidson as an angler; occasionally too he would miss his mark in the forest, especially if the deer were standing; he has even been known, though very rarely, to be surpassed on the moors; but as a spearman of salmon I have never

known his equal. How well I remember one sultry summer day when the river Dee was low enough for 'pouting' (spearing) purposes, a little party of us set out on this sport with Sandy as one of the number. We were all good old tried hands; yet at the close of the day he had three more fish to his own hand than we all put together. He had practised this sport from a boy about the Auld Brig o' Dee, and knew every stone for miles along the river where the salmon were likely to 'haul.' His practised eyes would scan the water to a great depth. His power of detecting the fish in streams and at great depths was something wonderful. It was a treat to watch him when the game came in view; the expertness of his movement, the eagerness of his manner, and the keenness of his glancing eye. Then he would raise the spear cautiously, take his quick aim, hurl it to a distance of many yards, transfixing his prey as surely as the falcon is sure of his quarry. I have seen him do this in all positions, sometimes while standing up to the neck in some dark, forbidding pool, at other times in some dangerous rapid, and yet of the many salmon I have seen him throw his spear at I have never known him to miss but one."

But another branch of his poaching operations comes now to be noticed; and in doing so we give the information of one often quoted in this sketch:

"The time would be coming on apace when his step would become lighter, and his eye brighter; for the glorious 12th of August had to the year of his death this inspiring effect on poor Sandy. The rifle would now be thrown aside, as if it had been useless lumber, and the fowling piece would be hunted up in the same manner the other had been a month or two before. Other sportsmen had their prescribed field of operations, Sandy's was practically without limit.

The crack of his gun might be heard anywhere, from Inverness to Glenmark—a distance of 80 miles. His habit was to shoot in early morning and late evening, especially when the gentlemen were in their shooting quarters. I have often heard him say, ‘Real gentlemen are deserving of respect; and I hold it to be too impudent to shoot over their grounds when they themselves are out.’

“It might be supposed that in the dim twilight or early dawn the produce of his gun would not be very great. But it was not so. Though he disdained to adopt any unsportsmanlike method of obtaining game—expressing his contempt for those who did so by the not uncommon remark, ‘Why! he is no man at all who would not give a muircock a chance for his life by getting on the wing; an old wife could kill a sitting bird’; yet he was so sure a shot, and his eyes, either from natural strength or long use, had got such a power of descrying, especially game and gamekeepers, that a full bag was often the result of an hour’s shooting in the dusk.

“The unemployed part of the day was spent by him in sleep, either below an overhanging rock, or deeply imbedded among the long heather. His power of falling asleep was something extraordinary, but it was somewhat like a Red Indian’s sleep, very light, for the slightest sound would awaken him.

“He not only had, for a poacher, the courteous feeling about not shooting when the gentlemen were out; but from a similar motive it was his general practice not to wander far from the marches of different gentlemen’s properties. I have heard him defend this practice by saying, ‘Some people would think this cowardice on my part, because, if likely to be taken, I could soon move across the march; but this is not the reason with me. It is because it is not so impudent like as when one goes into the heart of the property.’ There were, however, some notable exceptions to this rule.

“He was very well known to most of the gentlemen and keepers in the north of Scotland for these respectful characteristics, and was in consequence often tolerated when more ‘impudent’ poachers would not have been. Those keepers who were not inclined to overlook his poaching encroachments, or who treated him with, as he thought, unnecessary severity when he was in their power, roused a sleeping lion within him; and it was the only revenge he ever took or threatened to take even on those who had treated him most harshly. ‘I would never like,’ he would say, ‘to annoy a civil man, but those scoundrels who would not allow an *honest* man to live deserve punishment.’

“A case of this kind once occurred on Speyside. Sandy, as already noticed, was seldom caught napping, but it did sometimes happen. On one occasion he was passing the noonday hours on the braes of Avonside, concealed among the long heather as usual, waiting the evening to have his shot, when the party at the Lodge had retired for the day. He had fallen into a deeper slumber than usual, and was only awakened by the sound of footsteps close at hand. His dog ‘Charlie,’ knowing his business better than to rush off, like illiterate curs, and make a noise, apprehended the danger of the circumstances and crouched closer to his master; but all in vain. Men may pass very close to each other without discovery, dogs seldom will. Finding himself detected Sandy sprang to his feet at once, resolved to act as dignified a part as circumstances would permit. The gentleman of the party, who was himself the discoverer, flew into a passion and stormed furiously, while the object of his wrath stood before him unmoved.

“‘I demand your name instantly,’ said the irate sportsman, in a tone that told Sandy he had the worst to expect; and he therefore immediately replied, ‘My name is Alexander Davidson; what is your name?’

“‘My name,’ replied the other, ‘is George MacPherson Grant of Ballindalloch, and I require you to follow me.’

“Sandy was taken before the Justices and fined £5. When questioned about this business, he used to remark, ‘The money was not at all lost, for the moors of Ballindalloch paid for it handsomely afterwards. I knew Sir George perfectly, but I thought it would not be every day I would have it in my power to ask the name of such a great man ; and I believe he had as little occasion to ask mine.’

“I have been told that when he came to the Ballindalloch moors his eyes would assume a determined expression, his steps quicken, and his aim become unerring. He would also deviate from his usual practice of shooting on the marches, and would strike into the very finest ground and blaze away in defiance of the watchers, and yet he was never afterwards caught on these moors. When pursued, as he sometimes was, he has been known to disappear on comparatively bare ground, plunge into some moss pit leaving nothing exposed above water but his nose, and in this state remain till danger was past.”

CHAPTER XXIV



IT will readily be conjectured that in leading such a life, and following such a calling, Sandy must have had many privations to endure, and many adventures and hair-breadth escapes "by flood and field," but he had such an aversion to recount his hardships, lest he should be thought to be soliciting commiseration, and was so sensitive on the point of appearing to be boastful, that it was very seldom he could be got to narrate either his privations or adventures. One or two instances, merely as examples, must therefore suffice in this sketch.

On one occasion, late in the season, he set out from the neighbourhood of Ballater, provisioned only with the usual "whisky buckie," to have a day among the ptarmigan on Benavon. The first day's sport proving unsuccessful, he passed the night in some crevice of the rocks, and next morning found him shooting over the broad brow of Ben-abour. Wandering still further into the wilds, he on the following day made the circuit of Ben Muicdhu's towering summit, having nothing to live on all this while but the pound or two of meal and whisky, which, not deeming it would be required to support him for such a length of time, had not been reserved for future exigencies.

Retracing his steps, he was on the afternoon of the third day overtaken on Benavon by one of those bitter storms of wind and snow which sometimes suddenly sweep over these inhospitable regions, like a Siberian poorga, threatening destruction to any living thing that may happen to be within its range. He was near no place of shelter, and the biting wind sent its fang to the bone. Still he continued to make his way through it; but his poor dog Charlie, cowering and shivering at his heels, was sinking fast before the breath of the storm. His master did everything he could to cheer him up, patted him, ran with him in the face of the blast to keep the blood from freezing in his veins, but all to no purpose; poor Charlie caught no heat, but set up his pitiful whine amid the hiss of the vengeful storm. Sandy had been accustomed to bear many things with indifference, but the call for pity, whether from man or beast, went straight to his heart. Stripping himself of his thin tartan coat he rolled poor Charlie up in its folds, leaving himself exposed to the storm, and in this state he awaited its termination.

The incident would probably never have become known, for Sandy was as averse to dilate on his acts of mercy as he was to rehearse his sufferings, had not a man in search of some stray sheep happened to come upon him and his dog in the plight described. When the matter was referred to in his hearing, he would attempt to turn it off with the slight remark, "Poor beast! I was sorry for him." Though he made no scruple of denuding himself of his coat in the midst of a snow storm to alleviate the sufferings of his poor dog, it shows how shy he was of making known his own sufferings, when he did not ask the man who had been cast in his way for a morsel of food, though he must have been famishing, having had nothing to eat for the greater part of

two days, and knowing that many hours must elapse before he could reach a human habitation. On this occasion Charlie had fared much better than his master ; for he had not been allowed to feel the pangs of hunger while a bird was in the bag, in which there was probably enough for both, had the human sufferer had the means of cooking the game so as to make it fit and lawful food.

“ I don’t think,” said Sandy, when he got to the house where his wants were supplied, and as an apology for the heartiness of the meal he was able to indulge in, “ I don’t think I was ever so hungry in my life. It was provoking to have the birds on my back and yet be starving of hunger ; but I do believe another half day would have made me eat the grouse raw.”

The incident just mentioned shows how great his affection for his dogs was. Indeed it got, in the case of Charlie, to assume a type beyond what is current between man and his pets of the lower creation. An old maid’s attachment to her cat is passionate and jealous enough ; but it was a different kind of bond that knit Sandy to his dogs—a bond somewhat akin to what fellowship in suffering generates between human beings. “ When Charlie died, I shed tears over him ; we had gone so much together,” is perhaps the most pathetic expression Sandy was ever known to utter. Though Charlie reciprocated to the full his master’s affection for him, and though he would probably at any time have risked his life to save him had he been in danger, yet his power of enduring hunger and cold was not equal to his whose lot he shared. The following anecdote of Charlie has been told the writer by one who knew man and dog very well—

“ I remember poor Charlie very well,—a rather little, white and brown dog. He was up to all his ways, and had a sort of human fondness for him. Yet for all this, I have

known him under the pressure of sheer hunger desert him among the mountains. I recollect once when Sandy had been some days in the forest, Charlie made his appearance alone at my house. I was very much astonished, knowing how fond the dog was of him, and feared that something must have befallen his master, perhaps he might be lying dead among the hills. We got the dog into an outhouse and shut him in, giving him something to eat. But he had no sooner got his belly filled, than out he would be, scraping at the door and howling. I believe he would have gone mad if we had not let him out. As soon as the door was opened, off he went like shot, and though we tried to coax him and called to him, it was of no use; away he went, and we saw no more of him till a day or so after Sandy and he both appeared together, and I then learned that Charlie had come twelve miles for his victuals the day he paid us the visit alone."

"I never but once," Sandy used to say, "got fairly bewildered among the hills. It was late in the year, and I had been shooting in Glenrinn. It had been dull all day, and towards evening snow began to fall. I think I never saw the snow flakes so big or falling so fast. In less than two hours there was not the vestige of a black thing over the whole face of the earth. I knew the ground as well as you know the floor of your own house, and yet I could make nothing of it. I kept going on, going on, thinking I should certainly meet with some object that I could recognise. But no; and at last the snow got so deep that I scarcely knew if I was going up or down the hill. I thought of several plans to guide me, but they all failed. At last I came to a stream, and I resolved to follow it downwards, being sure it would bring me to some house; but so stupid was I in the head that I could not make out which way the stream ran, and

when I put in some snow to see, it seemed to me to float up the stream. But I reasoned that I might be bewildered, but the laws of nature were not likely to be wrong ; and so I followed the way the snow took, and at last with much ado I got to a house I knew."

These were some of his field experiences ; as an example of his flood experiences may be mentioned an adventure he once had in the Loch of Skene.

In his many wanderings he had come to this place for the purpose of shooting water-fowl, at a time when the loch was almost wholly frozen over with what appeared to him a strong sheet of ice. He had shot at and wounded a teal drake, which fell on the ice near the middle of the lake. Unfortunately on this occasion he was not accompanied by Charlie or any other dog, and was under the necessity of either relinquishing his prize, or venturing on the ice for it. Any bird he might have shot would have tempted him to incur some risk for its recovery, but for a teal drake he would have run almost any danger. He all his life attached a laughable importance to the feathers of this bird, as dressing for salmon hooks. It was a remark he often made, "The hook without teal is no better than one made up of crows' feathers." His desire to possess the feathers of this teal nearly proved fatal to him.

He had not made his way far on the ice when he became aware that it was not so strong as it appeared to be. He therefore proceeded with great caution, testing its strength at almost every step he took. When just in the act of picking up the coveted teal, the ice gave way ; a large ledge had snapped off, and on this ledge he found himself floating away into the open water in the centre of the lake. Strangely enough the fragile raft remained unbroken till it came into collision with the fixed ice, when it went into

fragments, precipitating Sandy into the water. At this critical moment he concentrated all the energies of his mind, and at once adopted the most likely way of escaping with sweet life. Firmly grasping his gun in both hands, he struck off with it fragment after fragment of the ice, taking care not to disengage but small pieces at a time lest he should be cut off from reaching the rest. In this way he made a lane of clear water for himself a distance of a quarter of a mile; and at last reaching ice of sufficient strength to sustain his weight, he hitched himself on to it, and gained the land, "very nearly gone," as he expressed it, and with his hands frightfully lacerated by the method he had adopted to break through the ice.

Sandy was a hero worshipper of the true Carlylean brand. He was disposed to pay due honour to the titled great; but unless the dignity they bore from men was sustained by a corresponding patent of nobility from nature, they were fit only to be made "laughing stocks of," and to be treated as counterfeit coin. When, however, he found both patents in conjunction his admiration and respect scarcely knew any bounds. It has been already stated that though everywhere known to be an inveterate and incurable poacher, he was on visiting terms with most of the gentry in the north; and seldom was there a ball or occasion of rejoicing in the wide district over which his calling extended to which he was not invited. He had by nature the feelings of a gentleman, and this almost constant intercourse with the first society in the country had given his manners and conversation a polish and fascination far above those of the lower or even middle classes. However incongruous it may appear that the professional violator of the law of the land should be on familiar terms of acquaintance with clergymen and peers of the *re-alm*, yet to Sandy the manse and the mansion were equally open.

In proportion to the warmth of his admiration for those who worthily bore their honour, so was the intensity of his dislike and contempt for those whom he deemed to have dishonoured their dignities. Extremely sensitive on all points of honour and character, he never either forgot or forgave any slight cast upon his own.

It happened once in a district where Sandy was very well known by every one, that the tenants of a certain large proprietor had resolved to entertain their landlord at a dinner and ball on the occasion of some family rejoicing. Sandy, happening to be in the neighbourhood at the time, and there being no special cause of quarrel between him and the guest of the evening, presented himself, on invitation by some of his friends among the tenants, to take part in the rejoicing, and add his tribute to the general esteem entertained for the proprietor. But such was not the view of the matter taken by the laird, who, too hastily fancying himself insulted by the presence of such a notorious poacher among his entertainers, demanded that Sandy should leave the company; otherwise he could not stay. Stung to the quick by this insult, Sandy immediately left, and repairing to a neighbouring hotel, engaged rooms and set up an opposition ball, which, as asserted at the time, not only damaged but eclipsed the entertainment to the laird.

Such was his method of taking revenge, and to the end of his days he never got over the slight thus cast upon him. When reference was made to it in his hearing, he would assume a posture of dignity, and in a tone of contempt, exclaim, "Churlish fellow! there is not a spark of the gentleman in him. No gentleman would ever do the like. But what would you expect of a dirty Whig?"

Of the many gentlemen's residences to which he received invitations, Gordon Castle held by far the first place in his

esteem. The late Duke of Richmond was his beau-ideal of what a peer of the *re-alm* ought to be. "He is generous, noble-minded, and no oppressor of the poor," were the terms in which Sandy usually described him. But in speaking of his son, then Earl of March, and now leader of her Majesty's Opposition in the House of Lords, these, or indeed any words, were wholly insufficient to express his admiration. "I tell you," he would say, and his eyes spoke more of his feelings than his words, "that is a young nobleman that his country will one day be proud of ; mind, I tell you !"

The author received the following account of Sandy's first interview with the Duke of Gordon from John MacLaren, gamekeeper to Mr. Coltman at Deskrie, who had it from Marshall, the famous violinist and protégé of his Grace. The Duke and a friend happened to be shooting on the Glenfiddoch moors, when he observed a puff of smoke on the hillside opposite and, by the aid of a glass, a man with a game bag slung over his shoulder, accompanied by a dog, also engaged in grouse shooting. Calling his head keeper he said, "Robert, I thought we were to have the whole of these moors to this party to-day. Who can that be shooting over there ?" "I do not know, your Grace, but I shall send to enquire." "No," said the Duke, "go yourself, it may be some mistake that you have committed in making your arrangements." Robert immediately set off, and was seen by Sandy more than a mile away, who however, instead of making off, sat down and awaited his arrival. The keeper knew Sandy and explained to him the circumstances, upbraiding him with his want of courtesy. "Well, Robert," said the culprit, "it was not that, but a pure mistake on my part. Tell his Grace that I am the last man in the world that would interfere with his sport, and that I am very sorry for what

has happened and will leave immediately." This being reported to the Duke, who had been told something of Sandy's character, a message was dispatched to intimate that he might take the other side of the hill for the afternoon and come to the Lodge in the evening. Sandy did so, bringing with him a well-filled bag, which he desired Robert to present to the Duke with his thanks for his kindness and an assurance that he would not again disturb either him or any party of his in the pursuit of their sport. It is recorded that he spent a very merry night at Glenfiddoch and received his first invitation to a dance at Gordon Castle.

He was invariably invited to the balls there when he happened to be accessible, and received particular attention from the Earl of March, who always took him aside as he was leaving, and gave him a hint not to want a day's sport when he was inclined. It is needless to say that his kindness was never abused. At these balls he often overheated himself in the dance, deeming, as he did, his displays in that line an expression of the high honour in which he held his entertainer. "The Earl of March," he would say, "made me dance with all the large company of ladies staying at Gordon Castle"; and proud he was of the honour. In his latter years, when his iron constitution was giving way, oxidized as it had been by the exposure and privations he had endured, he was less able to encounter these violent exertions with impunity, and sometimes was brought to admit that in dancing a long round of reels "he was not the man he had been."

CHAPTER XXV



FOR more than a year before his death, those acquainted with Sandy had marked symptoms of failing vitality. Although the black curly hair was still unmixed and the piercing eye undimmed, the once erect frame began to stoop, and the step was less light and springy than it had been. He was aware of all this himself; and probably knew more than he cared to disclose. He now spoke more frequently of his death than he was wont, and seemed to look upon it as an event by no means likely to be distant.

"I hope," he was often heard to say, "that when my time to die comes, it may take place among the bonnie blooming heather, with the glorious sun pouring down his rays of heat and light upon my perishing body."

That wish was granted him. On the morning of the 23rd of August, 1843, passing through Ballater, he met the late Dr. Sheriffs, who, observing something about Sandy's appearance he did not like and on being permitted to examine him as to the state of his health, strongly dissuaded him from going to the moors that day. The warning was unheeded; he must follow that bent of mind which he could never resist, and which made him appear to the poetical onlooker, to be the genius of his native mountains.

Next morning he was discovered on the hills of Glenbucket, lying on his back, with his faithful companion, the little brown pointer, seated on his breast, keeping watch over him. At first knowing his habits, the party who discovered him believed him to be asleep ; but it was the sleep that knows no waking. Passing the same place about an hour afterwards and finding the supposed sleeper still in the same position, their apprehensions were aroused, and it was resolved to make an investigation.

It has often been observed of dogs that have been attached to man, that they have a perception of death in their masters as a change that requires them to undertake duties they had never before practised. Had Sandy been concealing himself from the keepers or even asleep, his dog, as it had long been trained to do, would have crouched closely by his side to avoid being observed ; but now it took its stand openly upon his breast, and when a stranger approached, instead of concealing itself, the faithful creature attacked savagely, and it was not without a strenuous resistance that it allowed the remains of its master to be conveyed to the nearest human dwelling.

Thus passed away the last poacher of the olden type, under conditions befitting the life he led. Without justifying that life, it is only simple truth to say that in his own eyes it was no violation of the laws of God ; and in the eyes of those best capable of judging, it was more the result of a peculiarly romantic and chivalrous turn of mind than of any low or lawless disposition. Whatever be the opinion entertained by some on this matter, no one who knew him intimately—and he had a wider circle of acquaintance than any native of the north of Scotland of his day—will deny to his memory the testimony that he was imbued with the highest sentiments of honour and religion, while his actions

were characterized by the strictest integrity of purpose, and the loftiest generosity.

He was interred by his sisters in the family burying ground in the churchyard of Glenmuick, where his grave is marked by an undressed headstone, on which are cut in rude characters the initials of some of his forefathers, with the date "1715" attached to one of them.*

Having for some time previous to his death had a presentiment that it might occur without much warning, he had told his sisters that he wished his dog to be given to Mr. Mactier of Durris, as a mark of his esteem for that gentleman. That wish was given effect to; but Sandy's dog was found to have modes of working that unfitted it for co-operating with others of its kind; and it was accordingly seldom required to perform any service, but passed the rest of its days at Durris House in indolent luxury.

A life so romantic could scarcely pass away without evoking some poetic tears; and many an elegy was poured on Sandy's grave from the poet's corner of the northern press. Of other tributes to his memory the following, with which we close the memoir of this remarkable man, was written by the late Rev. Robert Scott, minister of Glenbucket, the parish in which his body was discovered, as above stated. It was published at the time in the Aberdeen newspapers, and afterwards, at the solicitation of the friends of the deceased, printed separately for private distribution among them—

THE BRAEMAR POACHER.

"Brave Sandy, art thou dead?" says a rustic bard, in an elegaic production transmitted to us, on the death of ALEXANDER DAVIDSON, the famed poacher of Braemar; and so say we—for more than once have we heard of the

* See Note X.

character and exploits of this mountaineer, and while we deprecated his occupation, felt a respect for the man. Sandy Davidson was no ordinary poacher. The deteriorating influence of his trade, that in general leads, step by step, to the utter demoralization of those who pursue it, had no such effect upon him. The simplicity and integrity of his character remained unchanged amid all the vicissitudes of his lawless—though we be loath to use the word—and strangely-chequered life. He was one among a thousand—a perfect specimen of the mountaineer. Sandy scorned the habiliments of the Sassanach; and when clad in the “garb of old Gaul,” with his dog and his gun, with a step as elastic as ever rose from the springy heather, and an eye whose dark glance long years could not dim, he might have been taken, while emerging from among the mists of a September morning, for the very genius of his native hills.

There was a romance about Sandy’s character and his way of life that rendered him a dangerous example. He was gifted in an eminent degree with those qualities that insure popular favour—fearless, generous, and kind-hearted.

“ His foot was foremost in the dance,
His laugh the loudest rang;
Nae e’e could match his mirthful glance,
Nane sung so sweet a sang.”

Nor is this random quotation misapplied. Sandy had “borne the bell” over hundreds at competitions in the “fantastic art” at Edinburgh, and in all parts of the country; and although in the “vale of years,” and scarcely so lithe in limb as in his early days, an invitation was found on him at his death from the Earl of March, to attend and take part in some merry-doings at Gordon Castle the other day.

His feats in eluding the keepers were innumerable. While closely chased, he has more than once plunged into a moss pit, and lain there with his face alone above water, till the baffled pursuers gave up the search. If caught, however, he yielded without resistance. He knew the penalty that his pursuits incurred; and, although an adept in the various sciences of defence, he was never known to raise his hand against those who attempted to apprehend him, even when

the odds were in his favour. Indeed, on his last coming within the reach of the law, which was a few months ago, he not only quietly accompanied his captor from Dufftown to Elgin, but treated him at every public-house in the way. Sandy was a perfect child of Nature—as complete a Hawkeye of the old country as the times would admit of. He had no home, and he wished for none—no place of residence but the broad face of the Highlands. His gun might have one day been heard ringing among the hills of Perthshire, and on another among the wilds of Lochaber ; now, among the moors of Braemar and the fastnesses that bound the “ infant rills of Highland Dee ”—then, beneath the black shadow of Cairngorm, at the rocky sources of the Avon and the Don ; to-day in Strathspey, and to-morrow far to the north-west, among the hills of Moray and Inverness. Everywhere Sandy was well known, and, wherever he was known, there was an open door and a Highland welcome awaiting him. Little he cared, however, for such accommodation.

Armed by Nature against the power of inclement skies, the shelter of a bush or rock on the hillside was at all seasons sufficient. There, with his faithful dog to watch over his slumbers, he slept soundly the live-long night ; and thus he was found, on the 24th August, 1843, by a party of sportsmen, a corpse cold and stiff, on the moors of Glencairney. Many a *quondam* visitor to Ballater, who had heard of Sandy and seen him, will, we believe, breathe a sigh of regret to the memory of the bold poacher when they hear that he is no more. His way of life made him often amenable to the game-laws ; but, although a poacher, he had little in common with that class. He was the Robin Hood of the freebooters of the forest and moorland. Poaching to him was not the effect of idle habits. It was part of the vocation of a simple but wild and untameable spirit, that scorned all restraint on the natural liberty of man. He was decently interred by his two sisters at Ballater.

APPENDIX

THE BURN OF TORGALTER

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE FLOOD OF 1846

About a mile beyond the clachan of Micras, and just before coming opposite the castle of Abergeldie, the Ballater and Braemar turnpike, in rounding a corner, crosses a small stream, which in view of more interesting objects is very likely to escape the tourist's notice. It would have claimed more attention sixty years ago. No public conveyance, and very few private ones, would then have passed a little stub-thatched cottage, situated on the roadside, not fifty yards from the confluence of the stream with the Dee, without stopping to draw upon the hospitality of the gudeman, or, in his absence, of his equally liberal co-partner, the gudewife. It would perhaps not be quite correct to designate these two worthies by the modern titles of landlord and landlady, for they neither had nor sought a licence to authorise them to entertain the needy or wayworn passing their doors. This privilege they took upon themselves in virtue of a law of Highland hospitality to the effect that it is sinful to turn the stranger from the door, without supplying his wants, especially if these lie in the direction of something to drink.

This hospitality will appear all the more needful when the exigencies of the traffic of the district, as there and then carried on, are duly considered. Very few bridges as yet spanned the Dee; often there was not one of any description between Potarch and Braemar, a distance of 35 miles.

Sometimes, indeed, there was one at Ballater, but more frequently there was not. A fine bridge built there towards the close of last century had been swept away by a flood in the year 1799; and it was many years before another was erected. Its successor, after some years of usefulness, shared a similar fate during the memorable flood of 1829, and there was again a considerable interpontium. Fords were therefore the staple thoroughfares across the river. They might be damaged, but they were never quite swept away by any flood. After the waters receded to their normal dimensions, a day or two spent in repairing them, by those interested in their efficiency for traffic—and they comprised hundreds of families—generally sufficed to make them as good as new, or even better.

Whilst they possessed this advantage over bridges, that if damaged, they could be easily repaired, it must be allowed that the river exercised over them a somewhat despotic and capricious sway, which often seriously interfered with the convenience of the natives, sometimes to the risk, and even to the loss of their lives. It was therefore found necessary to have help at hand, in case of any sudden exercise of the above jurisdiction, on the part of the treacherous river; and accordingly prudence and humanity had dictated the propriety of having a human dwelling at one entrance at least, if not at both. It is probable that it was for this humane purpose the stub-thatched cottage, above referred to, had originally been built; for right in front of it was the *Aanfuile*, the principal, if not the only ford for wheeled carriages between Ballater and Braemar. Nor was its usefulness confined to cases of risk of life.

It might have been a nice enough thing for a hardy Highlander to cross by the ford on a fine summer day, when the stream was reduced to a silver thread in mid channel;

but to take the water in winter either by night or by day, when the river was not only strong but speckled with grue (floating snow), required no small courage, even in a Highlander. It was therefore deemed expedient—necessity is the mother of invention—to have appliances at hand to raise the requisite amount of resolution for taking the ford, and after having dared it, to take away the chill consequent on the adventure, so as to prevent evil effects following. Very naturally then the human dwelling soon became a hospice. Its existence in such circumstances was justified, if justification it required, for the same reason that we justify the erection of similar establishments on the Grimsel and Furca passes. Besides, there had at one time been, and probably there still was sixty years ago, a boat here for the convenience of such passengers as did not care to breast the torrent; and it was considered contrary to all rule that the boatman should be dry.

When the boat, which had been kept principally for the laird and his people at the Castle, was supplanted by the *cradle*—still an object of great curiosity to Deeside visitors—and the ford had become obsolete, through the erection of the chain bridge at Crathie (1834) it was not found necessary to discontinue the hospice which supplied true Highland refectations, though under ban of the Excise, till a very recent date. Many a queer scene and many a wild one were here enacted; but at length a combination of the territorial and imperial authorities (lairds and gaugers) was formed to put a stop to its illicit and now unneeded trade, and succeeded so well that in the place where it existed there is not now one stone left upon another.

In the early days of George Brown, there were the rudiments of a Highland clachan at this now deserted corner. Besides the boathouse or alehouse, or whatever else it

might be called, there were several small dwellings, and a manufactory of oatmeal, well known in the district for its wonderful achievements in the way of grinding. A manufactory it was in the original acceptation of that now perverted term, for, with the exception of turning the stones, and not always that, all the other operations required to convert the raw material into serviceable oatmeal, were strictly performed by the hand. The producer of the grain regularly sent his wife and daughters to the mill to sift the shillin, that is when he was not disposed to go himself to have a crack, and perhaps something else with "Boatie" and the miller. On such occasions the amount of work performed at the mill was by no means astonishingly large; and it is believed to this day, that what bits of machinery the establishment could boast of were contrived with the special object of affording the miller opportunities of pretty lengthy sederunts with his customers in Boatie's without reducing him to the necessity of turning off the water. It is even on traditional record that, when on one occasion he and a drouthy shepherd had adjourned as usual to Clinkum's, Collie, being more hungry than drouthy, had preferred the mill to the alehouse, and quietly betaken himself thither. Planting himself in the bin, his appetite had so far outrun the supply reaching him that, when his master and the miller, after satisfying their wants, which generally took a good hour, returned to the mill, they found to their dismay, the voracious animal had licked up the whole proceeds of an hour's grinding, and was wistfully eyeing the spout for further store.

All had now passed away. The mill was removed higher up the stream to what was considered a more advantageous position, and Clinkum's, after a period of free trade, was also obliged to succumb in the manner already

stated ; so that this once bustling corner will now attract no attention, and the mountain stream which passes it, and which once performed such feats of grinding at Buckie Mill, issuing timidly, as it now does, from the corner of a larch plantation, and babbling feebly as it struggles with the huge boulders that stud its channel and impede its course to join the foaming river, will scarcely be noticed by the passing stranger.

But though its banks are desolate, there are many places on Deeside now much frequented by tourists that are less worthy of a visit than this same tiny stream. Should a stray naturalist pause on his way, to examine its features, he would find not a little to interest, perhaps something to instruct him. He might be led to inquire whence came the great blocks of granite and gneiss that lie scattered around, or are piled upon each other in huge cairns. Evidently from their polish and rounded forms they have been subjected to much wear and tear and tossing to and fro. Have they been floated hither from a distant shore on the back of some huge iceberg which chanced to be stranded on this particular promontory in the days when the valley of the Dee was but a long fiord from the German Ocean? That mode of conveyance will hardly account for their rounded and water worn outlines. Are they then a deposit from some *Mer de Glace* that once filled the corries of Black Geallaig, and gathering the fragments of the higher rocks upon its bosom slipped them gently down and heaped them up in rounded moraines in the valley below? It is probable that an amateur geologist would take this view of their deposition here, especially if he had seen the similar deposits in the Grindelwald, and had read in books how large heaps of rocky fragments are gathered on the surface of glaciers, and sinking into crevasses, get played upon by surface streams

and so in time become waterworn like those around him. "Quite true, my amateur geologist," I feel myself sorely tempted to reply, "there may be such deposits on Deeside—perhaps the knolls of the Tomadoes are of this origin—but in regard to these, you have, like Oldbuck, gone on altogether too old a scent. Unfortunately for your fine theory my knowledge is of the Edie Ochiltree type—for, glacier here or glacier there, I mind the laying down o' them."

Ah! tiny streamlet, playing teet-bo here and there among that wild chaos of shattered rock that bestrews thy path; here with an eddy like the dimple on the face of a child you slip beneath a boulder or two, to babble out yonder with infantile prattle. Ah! tiny streamlet, I know you have not always been so gentle and lamb-like as now, and those who know thee not may little suspect how at times thou canst play the lion too, and roar and tear at the mountains most savagely. It was at no distant geological period that these boulders were rent from the mountain side and deposited here.

The occasion was one which will long be remembered in this part of Deeside, and is not unworthy of a passing notice, when attention is being called to the scene where it occurred. But first let us take a survey of the bed of the stream from the river to the mountain. Passing through the larch plantation we come at once to a deep cut in the rocks, which is so narrow and so overhung with hazel and other bushes as to be almost invisible from above. At the upper end of this cut there is the unfailing linn of such places. Then a more open space where the stream takes a turn over a bouldery channel. Then the rocks, the outer timbers of the adjacent mountain, are again struck. Then more linns, deep pools and precipitous banks for a considerable distance, till the moorish upland is gained. Through this region of boulder drift,

which slopes backwards to the steep hill sides, the stream has cut for itself a narrow trough, to the depth of a hundred feet or more. The geologist who wishes to study this rather puzzling formation will find here an immense excavation ready for inspection ; and perhaps from a careful study of it he may be able to determine whether it be a deep sea formation, brought thither by icebergs, or a glacial accumulation, or the eroded materials of some mighty Alp, of which the neighbouring hill is but the decayed weather-beaten stump, huddled together in this once rocky valley by the torrent and the avalanche. At all events, he will find a new field to explore which may probably yield a new fact to science.

The little stream which has laid open to the foundation this large bed of diluvial drift must have had many a spate since it first began the work of excavation. Perhaps, like human excavators, it wrought more vigorously in its youth than now. Perhaps, too, great climatic changes may have attenuated its body and crippled its energies, so that no estimate of its years can be made from the amount of its labours. Of what it may have done in the vigour of youth we may, however, form some conjecture from a consideration of what it really did accomplish not more than a quarter of a century ago in its green old age.

The morning of the 8th of August, 1846, broke with unusual, almost unnatural brightness ; but ere the sun had ascended far in his course, heavy masses of clouds began to gather round him. At intervals, he shot his beams through the openings between them with intense splendour, and displayed the huge proportions of their volumes. Gradually their thickening masses shut out the whole sky ; and though the day was calm, a filmy mist drifted along from the south-east under the dark clouds, and at no great distance above the ground. As the gloom deepened, the growling of distant

thunder behind the Grampians was getting more loud and continuous. Rain began to fall, at first not heavily, but like a thick mist with a few heavy drops now and then. Soon, however, the mist changed into a drenching drizzle, the thunder became louder, and with every successive peal there came a rush of very heavy rain for a second or two. Before noon the thunder was deafening and the forked lightning played almost incessantly. The heavy rain was no longer fitful but constant, and every minute increased the intensity of the watery discharge. The streams began to break from their channels, and channels that had been dry for months, now carried floods. The whole population without exception of age or sex turned out with what implements they could find to keep the burns from breaking out and carrying off the arable soil, and depositing in its stead the stones and gravel with which they were charged.

So intent were all on this work, and so severely did it tax their energies, that no one thought of a little cottage, situated on the very brink of this same stream, or of the poor bed-ridden occupant, who in her day and station was a character, though not of the amiable stamp. Terrified by the glare of the lightning, the rattle of the thunder, and the scarcely less loud though duller roar of the stream, Janet had screamed for assistance till no voice was left her, and then wrought herself into a fury of rage at the neglect she suffered. As yet her little dwelling was not thought to be in danger, and her splenetic fits were too common to be much heeded, even had any one been by. About 2 P.M. an unusually heavy and prolonged roll was followed instantly by a discharge from the murky clouds that made those exposed to it gasp for breath as if they had been under a shower bath. Immediately the streams broke off from their channels with a violence that made human efforts to restrain them utterly contemptible, and

they were abandoned as useless. Great mounds of mountain débris were hurled together on fruitful fields, and the Dee flowed black with soil. After this there was a short lull in the storm, but an ominous lull, for the darkness still increased. All at once the gloom was broken by the most vivid flashes of lightning playing athwart each other on the hill-side. Then two or three terrific peals of thunder, and the clouds seemed to lift immediately, disclosing the whole mountain as if covered by a heavy shower of snow. Then came a rushing sound like that of a whirlwind in a forest, followed soon by a hoarse rumbling noise in the upper corries.

“Janet’s house! oh auld Janet’s house!” shouted some females who were the first to observe that the torrent had surrounded it, and was fast undermining its foundations.

Though their cries could not be heard for the roaring of the stream, their wild rushing towards the spot attracted attention, and in a few seconds a little crowd had assembled on the bank.

“Can nothing be done to save the poor body?” cried the women imploringly. No human strength could by this time reach the door; but two or three daring fellows seized a spade each, plunged into the roaring waters, tore open a hole in the roof behind, and bore the poor creature foaming and raging to the bank in safety. It was not a moment too soon. The rumbling noise first heard in the upper corries was fast approaching.

It was a pitiful scene: poor Janet, now a lunatic, for she had quite lost her reason, lay wrapped in her blanket on the green, jabbering maledictions on her deliverers, while the wild torrent approached with elevated front, dashed against her frail habitation, and swept it before it as if it had been a heap of chaff, leaving not one stone upon another.

Janet was conveyed to a neighbouring house, where, though every attention was paid her, she never rallied from the effect of her fright, and in a few weeks after died.

Between this sad scene and another wholly ludicrous, only a few minutes intervened. Auld Janet was scarcely rescued when the attention of those gathered around her was directed to some people rushing hurriedly in the direction of the turnpike. A nobleman in a grand carriage, driven by red-jacketed postillions, was on his way to his shooting quarters in Braemar, and had passed with difficulty the Torgalter Burn just before its sudden and fearful rise above noticed, but before he reached the next stream, though only a few hundred yards farther on, the full flood was down, rushing in channels from 4 to 8 feet deep through the turnpike. To pass was utterly impracticable. He therefore resolved to return to Ballater; but his retreat had been more effectually cut off than his advance had been barred. Thus trapped, and getting impatient of delay, he kept driving from the one stream to the other in hopes of finding some means of passing either—the postillions meanwhile shouting at the pitch of their voices for assistance. As to the shouting, they might, with as good a chance of being heard, have been whispering in a discharging battery; but the novel spectacle of red-jacketed postillions driving wildly hither and thither did bring the natives to the rescue. Rescue it was only to the worn out horses and postillions; for the noble animal of the human species who seemed to have more fire in his blood than sense in his brains, refused to leave his carriage, though he was constrained to order it to be drawn up alongside a string of carts that had been caught in the same trap, and were patiently awaiting the subsidence of the spate. When the carriage stopped an old man approached the door, hat in hand, and respectfully requested what was its

occupant's "wull." "Why," said he crossly, "can't you fellows make a passage for me through these torrents?"

"To make a passage through the waters," meekly put in the old man, "belongs to the Almichty alane; an' its my thought that it's nae his will that ony o' his creatures shu'd gang afore him i' the mids o' the meantime; but gin ye'll cause the horses to be lowsed, they can be put up somewhere, and get a feed, an' ye can rest yersel' in my house; an' though I'm no safe to say that it's free o' draps the day, ye'se be very welcome to sic shelter as it can gie ye; an' in an hour or twa we'll see what can be deen to get ye through."

"An hour or two!!" exclaimed the frothy lordling, "wait here an hour or two! I'll be hanged if I do."

"Aweel, weel, sir," replied the other quietly, "your will either way; but it's my thought that ye're mair likely to be droon't than hang't if ye dinna," and turning aside, remarked to his companions in Gaelic, "*Fear nach gabh comhairle, cha ghabh e cobhair*" (who refuses advice refuses aid). He was about to move off, when his worship, or whatever else he was, called after him—

"Now, friend, that I think of it, if you could find somewhere to put up these horses for a little, and get them fed, I fancy I shall very soon be able to push through on horseback."

By this time the postboys were busy unfastening the jaded animals, which they housed in a neighbouring stable; but it was not till nearly three hours had elapsed that the journey could be resumed as proposed; and the carriage had to wait the clearing of the roads some days after.

Geologically viewed, this spate is not without significance. On this occasion more mountain débris was carried down and deposited in the valley in the course of three hours than had been conveyed thither by all the floods of the previous

generation ; and the question is therefore apt to arise, in the unscientific mind at least, whether in the post-tertiary age such rainfalls or even heavier ones may not have been very common. In order to account for the phenomena of even this comparatively recent period, geologists do not scruple to assume conditions of climate far more different from those now experienced than would be required for the supposition that the meteorological state of our atmosphere was then such that rainfalls like the one described were of annual or even more frequent occurrence. And if so, it is evident that greater changes in the configuration of hill and dale may have been produced in a century then, than it is now the fashion to ascribe to thousands of ages. Be that as it may, certain it is that not many hundreds of such spates would have sufficed to open in the boulder drift the whole of that immense cut in which the stream now flows.

NOTES

I desire to take this opportunity of expressing my obligations to Mr. John MacPherson, Braemar, whose intimate knowledge of the history and traditions of his district has been put at my disposal on many points. I am also indebted to Mr. W. J. Watson, B.A., Rector of the Inverness Royal Academy, for invaluable assistance in Gaelic matters. I ought to add, however, that the responsibility for errors in this department is entirely my own.—F. C. D.

I

PERSONAL NAMES OF HIGHLAND MAR

(See page 9)

OWING to the fortunate preservation of some early documents relating to Upper Deeside, specimens of the names current in the district can be given from as remote a date as the beginning of the 16th century. Among the Castle Grant papers there are deeds of 1527-8, referred to in the article on the Farquharsons, which are signed by or on behalf of a considerable number of the tenants in Braemar and Strathdee. There is also extant a roll of the King's tenants in the Earldom of Mar for the year 1539. Rather more than 150 years later we have the Poll Book with its complete register of inhabitants, so that altogether the nomenclature of Braemar and the neighbourhood is fairly well known for nearly 400 years.

Before dealing with the names in detail, it may be well to begin with a few remarks on the general principles of old Highland personal names. As is well known, fixed surnames did not become the rule in the Lowlands till the 14th or 15th century, and not till much later in the Highlands. (1) The typical method of designating an individual with the Gael was by his *pedigree*. Thus, Iain Mac Alasdair mhic Uilleim, John the son of Alexander the son of William. John's son, Donald, would be Dòmhnall Mac Iain mhic Alasdair mhic Uilleim, and so on indefinitely, except that practical convenience limited the number of ancestors embraced in the name, as ordinarily used, to one or two. This system of naming by patronymics was modified in

various ways, doubtless to secure greater definiteness of designation; and the modification took place sooner in the districts bordering on the Lowlands (and therefore in Mar) than in the remoter parts of the Highlands.

(2) *Descriptive epithets* were tacked on to the patronymic. This habit was practically universal and applied to all classes, high and low, from the chief to the humblest cottar. The great Marquis of Argyll was known as Gillespie Grumach (gloomy), Robert Macgregor as Rob Roy (red), Finlay Farquharson as Finlay Mor (big), and so on. These epithet names should, of course, have disappeared with the death of the individual, but in the Highland borders they tended to become fixed as true surnames, and to be borne by the descendants of the original holder. Hence the Roys, Moirs, Beggs of Aberdeenshire, and other names of the same kind which will be referred to below. The origin of such wide-spread names as Cameron ("crooked nose") and Campbell ("wry mouth") is to be explained in the same way. They were transferred as designations to the whole clan from some early chief who had been so described. Bodily characteristics or peculiarities supplied the majority of these nicknames, or by-names as they are more generally called.

(3) The patronymic was also often supplemented by a name indicating the *trade*, rank or profession of the bearer, such as gobha (smith), taillear (tailor), greasaich (shoemaker), brocair (badger hunter, whence Brockie), &c.

Besides his patronymic and by-name, the Highlander possessed his clan name, and sometimes even his sept name also. Two examples, taken at random from Braemar about 1700, will make clear what is meant. The full designation of one James Keir ran thus in Gaelic: "Seumas Ciar *alias* Seumas MacChoinnich *alias* Seumas Beg." Ciar is the clan name (if the Keirs can be called a clan), MacChoinnich is the patronymic, and Beg is the by-name. His descendants might conceivably call themselves by any of the three. Similarly with "Dòmhnall MacLaomuinn *alias* Mac Gille Dhuibh *alias* MacPhàraig Breabair," the first is the clan, the second the sept of the clan, the third the patronymic, and the fourth the by-name ("weaver"). Each of the four,

it may be remarked, is represented to-day, as Lamont, MacIldowie, Paterson, and Brebber.

It must not be supposed, however, that in ordinary life the Highlander carried about such a weight of denominations. He was satisfied with his patronymic or by-name (besides of course his Christian name), and rarely used his clan name, except on formal or important occasions, or when he left his native district.

In the lists of 1527-39 printed below it will be noticed that the full names are not attempted, the scribes having contented themselves with as little as served to distinguish the individual. Patronymics abound, and also by-names; true surnames are less common. It should also be remembered that the names have been changed as far as possible into the lowland form (the large number of *-sons* is evidence of this), so that many of them have to be re-translated back into Gaelic before their forms, as actually used, are truly represented. Probably the most striking feature of the lists is the large number of names they contain that are still current on Deeside and throughout the neighbouring districts.

The scribe has Latinised many of the Christian names, as the document to which they were subscribed was in that language.

TENANTS ON THE KING'S LANDS, THE EARL OF HUNTLY'S
AND GORDON OF ABERGELDIE'S, IN STRATHDEE IN 1527.

Findlayus Farquharstone. This is the famous Finlay Mor, the
"virtual founder" of the clan Farquharson.

Thomas Kay. Kay = (Ma)c Aoidh, Mackay.

Dominus Richardus Thome McWillzeme.

Johannes Clerk. He occurs in another place as Clerk Ego; evidently a priest or descended from one. The Clarks or Clan Chlerich were one of the minor septs of the Mackintoshes.

David McAwuthone. The *u* may be a mistake for *n*. In that case MacAntony would be meant.

Willelmus Tailzour. Gael. tailliar was borrowed from Eng.

Tailzour Roy. Roy is Gael. ruadh. The red tailor.

Tailzour Crowbo. Taillear crùbach, the cripple tailor. Christian names and surnames are wanting in these three.

Duncanus McKinriche. Mackendrick, Anglicised as Henderson, like MacAlister and Sandieson, MacPhail and Polson, Macgregor and Grierson, &c., &c.

Euuyn Dondoch. Gael. Edghan, *i.e.*, Evan or Ewen, common as a surname on Deeside. Dondoch may be the name of his holding.

Alexander More. Mór, big; whence Moir. Broad Scotch keeps the proper pronunciation of the vowel. The late Dr. MacBain of Inverness, the chief authority on Highland nomenclature, remarks on the prevalence of these descriptive epithets as surnames in Aberdeenshire. He instances Bain (fair), Roy (red), Duff (black), Keir (dusky), Don and Dunn (brown), and others.

Patricius Makfettis. MacPhettrish, son of Patrick, may be meant. Paterson would be the English form.

Mathaeus Don. Gael. donn, brown. Very common name in Mar, both in the English and Gaelic form. Downie is the same name. All of them claimed a Farquharson descent. See the article on the clan.

Gawmak Molenys wif. Gael. gàmag, stride. Probably a nickname. Molenys, "of the mill."

Andreas McMorthy. MacMurchaidh, Murdo's son; whence Murchieson, but not apparently a name that established itself on Deeside.

Andreas McFeris. This is the phonetic spelling of Mac-Fear(gh)uis, in English Ferguson, which was sometimes confused with Farquharson. It also occurs without the patronymic form as Ferris.

Johannes McMorgan. The connection of the name Morgan with Deeside reaches back to the dawn of history. There was a Morgund, Earl of Mar, in the 12th century. MacBain observes, "It is remarkable that the name Morgan exists, or in historic times existed

[in Scotland], nowhere else than in Aberdeenshire and among the Sutherland Mackays." The clan Morgan is in fact a general name for the clan Mackay.

Wilzeme Dow. Gael. dubh, black. Dowie is the same word. As "dubh" is pronounced like the Scotch for pigeon, it sometimes got translated into Dove.

Johannes McFuktur. This is an interesting form. It was once not uncommon in the Highlands and is still occasionally found, but is extinct on Deeside. In modern Gael. the spelling is MacFucadair, son of the fuller, or in Scotch "waulker," which gives the personal name Walker.

Johannes McMichell. Son of Michael. Mitchell is the same word.

James McKinlackour. Probably MacFhionnlaidh (*fh* silent) odhair, son of dun Finlay.

Gradach Ynnynthome. Gael. Inghean Thòmaidh = Gradach, Thomas's daughter. MacThòmaidh (= MacCombie) would be the masc.

Alexander Maitland. He was probably an absentee tacksman drawing profit from his sub-tenants.

Johannes Lammeson. The form McLammie also occurs. Both are meant for MacLaomuinn.

Alex. Thomeson. This is the Anglicised form of the Gael. MacThòmais or MacThòmaidh (*th* silent). It is usually spelt Makcome (3 syllables) in these early lists, and was once well represented all over Upper Deeside. The MacComies or MacCombies of Glen-shee were prominent in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Donald Pethanoch. The second word is probably the name of his holding. Cp. Dondoch above.

Merzone Ego. This surname, which still survives though in much reduced numbers, may be classed with Morgan for antiquity. It is one of the names found among the early Celtic Earls of Mar. Ego, son of Fergus, had a charter of Auchterairn in Cromar in 1364. The meaning is doubtful: some Gaelic scholars see in it an early form of Adam.

Donald Gerrow. More commonly Garrow. Gael. garbh, rough, or stout as applied to persons. The Sliochd Garraidh (race of Garrow) of Braemar was a small sept of the Stewarts. Donald Mor MacGarraidh was piper to the Earl of Mar in the '15.*

Wille Dag. Gael. dag, a pistol. Highlanders were and are very partial to ludicrous nicknames; cp. Gawmak above. Farquhar, the eponymus of the clan Farquharson, was known as F. nan gad (F. of the wands), in allusion to his supposed trade of basket-maker. Similarly Wattie "Plants" in this volume.

John Red McEdwart. Reid has rather ousted the form Roy as a rendering of Gael. ruadh, red.

Donald MacHardy. The home country of the MacHardies is the Highlands of Aberdeenshire and the immediate neighbourhood to the north and south. Those of Braemar are said to have enjoyed with the Farquharsons the favour of the Earls of Mar, but while the Farquharsons succeeded in rising from the position of tenants to be lairds, the MacHardies, with some few unimportant exceptions, did not own land on Deeside. They were, however, numerous and influential. The Strathdon branch counted themselves of the Clan Chattan and followed Mackintosh as their chief. The original form of the name, according to MacBain, is to be found in Gartnaigh or Gratney. There was an Earl of Mar thus called about 1300. This developed through MacCardney to the present form. The *h* is intrusive, and silent in the vernacular it may be noticed.

Elspet Innyfuktour. Inghean Fucadair, the fuller's or Walker's daughter. See above, Johannes McFuktur.

Ago McGillequhome. Ego, son of the servant of (St.) Thomas. Saints' names were popular among the Celts, but they preferred to use them combined with the prefix Mael or Gille, especially the latter, both meaning "servant." Thus we have Gillies, servant of Jesus; Gillanders, servant of Andrew; Malcolm, servant of Columba; Gilmour, servant of Mary; and many others.

* Adam, *Clans and Regiments.*

Johannes Deray. Modern Dewar. The Gael. is deòradh, pilgrim or keeper of religious relics. "The office was hereditary," Macdonald says in his *Place Names*, "and gave the right to the possession of the Deray croft."

Thomas Kyntaggart. T., son of the priest. Gael. sagart, a priest, from Lat. sacerdos.

David McAblu. ?

Relicta McRalte. MacRaid's widow. The MacRaids or Clan Tarralaich were associated with Petty, near Inverness. The name is derived from the word Herald or Harold. Heraldson also occurs among our names, evidently as a translation of MacRaid.

Patrick Brebner. More commonly spelt at this date Brabaner, the meaning being native of Brabant. With this may be taken also Fleming, native of Flanders. Artificers and traders from the Low countries of the Continent settled in Aberdeenshire at a very early time, and evidently descendants found their way to the Highlands, where doubtless their skill in the arts, e.g., in making arms, would be in some request. The Flemings of Auchintoul in Glengairn are said to have got their lands some time after Harlaw from the Earl of Mar.

Robert Stewart. For the Stewarts of the district, see p. 279.

Nicoll Davidson. The Gael. Mac Dhàì gives rise also to the Anglicised forms Dawson and Desson.

Johne Males. The later spelling is Mellis. The Gael. is Mael-Isa, servant of Jesus. Cp. Gilchrist, servant of Christ.

Janat Enytiyr. Modern Gael. spelling Inghean-an-t-saoir, the wright's daughter. The masculine form is Mac-an-t-saoir (Macintyre).

Janat Quhyt. Translating Bhàn, "fair," no doubt.

John Corbet. A Norman name, which first appeared in Aberdeenshire in the 12th cent.

Thomas McGilliglas, Ferquhar McGillikeir. "Son of the fallow lad or man, son of the dusky lad." Mac and

Gille were ultimately dropped, giving rise to the modern surnames Glass and Keir.

Patrick Southar. Translating Gael. greasaich, shoemaker.

Gresal Lyndsaye.

Morgund Mathowson. Gael. MacMhathain.

Matheus McGillereache. "Son of the brindled or freckled lad." Now Riach. Cp. Glass and Keir above.

Hanre Moris. Morris and Morrison were and still are used among the Gaels as the English equivalents of Mac Gille Mhoire, son of the follower of (St.) Mary.

THE KING'S TENANTS IN BRAEMAR AND STRATHDEE IN 1539.

It has to be pointed out that the following rental includes only the names of those who were responsible for the rent to the Exchequer; the hundreds of sub-tenants who sat under the King's rentallers find no place in the list. In fact all those who are given here were in a way lairds. The lands of Braemar were held by comparatively few different individuals, but on descending the valley to Crathie we find much greater subdivision. The tradition that "bonnet lairds swarmed in that part of the country" about the time of Finlay Mor turns out to be well supported by this piece of documentary evidence.

INVEREY—*Finlay Farquharson* and *Johannes* alias *Clerk Ego*.

DALMORE—*Thomas Donaldson*.

CORRIEMULZIE—*Duncan Donaldson* and *Thomas Donaldson*.

CRAGGAN—*Thomas Donaldson*.

WESTER ALLANAQUOICH—*Thomas Donaldson*. Next to Finlay Farquharson these Donaldsons would appear to have been the most important men in the district at this time. Unfortunately their name tells no more than that their father was Donald. According to tradition the Mackenzies of Dalmore were in possession of that land at least, before 1500, but whether they and the Donaldsons are one and the same it is impossible to say.

EASTER ALLANAQUOICH — *James Turra* and *Alexander Gardin*. Lowlanders and absentees.

AUCHENDRAWIN—*John Stewart*. The prevalence of the name Stewart in Braemar is what might be expected when we remember the long period during which the Kings and their Stuart relations possessed the Earldom, and the readiness of the Highlanders to assume the name of their patrons. One small sept or family of the name claimed to be descended from the "Wolf of Badenoch," the grandson of Robert II. The tradition among the Farquharsons was that the previous holders of Invercauld were Stewarts, somehow related to the House of Mar. "A' Stewarts," however, as the proverb reminds us, "are nae sib to the King."

CAMUSNAKIEST—A quarter was held by *Duncan McMore* and *Donald McGown* ("smith's son"); a quarter by *John McAlister* and *John Dow*; a quarter by *Finlay Glas* and *Patrick Candvane*; and a quarter by *Finlay McGillewey*.

Candvane is Gael. Ceann-bhàn, white head. McGillewey is Mac Gille or Mac 'Ghille Dhuibh, generally spelt MacIldowie. This is the only tenant of the name in 1539, but there is ground for believing that the MacGilleweys once held East Allanaquoich and Inverey. A hundred years after this the name is the commonest in the district. They considered themselves to be Lamonts, and in the 18th century gradually dropped the MacGillewey. Sir James Lamont in his "Declairation of the true extraction of the MacIldowies *alias* Lamont," dated 1661, says that "John MacIldowie in Castleton in the Brae of Mar and all the MacIldowies are my true native kindly people and kinsmen." Whether this relationship is imaginary, or how representatives of this west country clan found their way to the heart of the Grampians, is unknown. In later days at any rate, the Lamonts, as tenants of the Farquharsons, followed that clan.

AUCHALLATER—*Alex. and William Stewart.*

CASTLETON — *Duncan Donaldson; John Heraldson* (cp. McRalte, p. 277); *Pat. and John McEwin; Duncan Gibbon and Thomas Roy.*

The original of Gibbon is Gilbert. "Its resemblance to Gillebride, servant of St. Bridget, ensured it a permanent place in the Highlands; its pet form Gibbon was an especial favourite in Perthshire at an early date" (MacBain).

INNERQUHAVIT—*John alias Clerk Ego.*

INVERCAULD, KELOCH, CLUNY—*Finlay Farquharson.*

ABERARDER—*James Stewart.*

SCHANWELL—*John Stewart, John Seytoun.*

TULLOCHCOY—*William Roy; Donald Roy and John Reoch; John Donaldson; James Roy.*

MONALTRE—*Robert Scheris*, rector of Quysny; *Walter Stewart.* The presence of the rector of Cushnie here proves that some of these rentallers were practically non-resident landlords. Hence such Lowland names as Turra, Garden, and Seytoun.

CRATHIENAIRD—*John Reid Gordoun, Alex. Symoun, And. McFeris, Alex. McCarvy, Pat. Stewart, Eliz. Symoun.* The Symons are still represented in Crathie.

KIRKTOWN OF CRATHIE—*Alex. Garden, Thos. Lang, Pat. McTagart, John Grasse alias Cordonar.* The scribe translates correctly. Grassie, Gressick, Grassick are Gael. greasaich, shoemaker or cordiner.

BALMORAL—*Eliz. Stewart, John Gordon, John Leith, Alex. Gordon.* The name Gordon begins to appear as the Abergeldie country is approached.

INVERGELDER—*W. Canwell, W. Schaw, John Makcome.* Canwell looks good Saxon but it conceals Gael. ceann-mhaoil (mh=v), bald head. The head and its appearance gave rise to several names—Candvane (white, fair), Candmore (big), Candow (black), and Kennedy (ugly head!).

BALNACHOCHANE—*James and Janet McIntailyeour.*

WESTER MICRAS—*Alex. McInwill* (Mac Iain Dhughail, son of John Dugaldson, or possibly Mac Iain Mhaoil; cp. Canwell, p. 280), *John Murgounis* (Morgan), *W. Cameron*, *T. Roy*, *E. Dwn* (Gael. donn, brown), *A. McAlister*, *T. Moreis*.

EASTER MICRAS—*T. McGlas* (grey, fallow), *P. McFers* (Ferguson), *John*, *Finlay*, and *Patrick Duncanson*, *A. Ardson* (Gael. àrd, tall, whence Aird; but Ardson may be meant for Mac(H)ardy in English form), *W. Tailyeour*, *A. McMorgan*, *A. Fereson* (cp. McFers), *W. Gordon*, *D. McGilleglas*.

DALBAGIE—*John Clerk*, three *McReochs*, *P. Roy*, *W. Brabaner*.

CULTS—*John Gordon*, *Don. Farquharson*, *Johannes Clerk*.

RINABROUCH—*John Neilson*. Neill, Gael. Niall, whence MacNeill and Neilson, was a common Christian name. The English Nelson is Nell's son.

TOMBELLIE—*Thomas Cay* alias *Makcuyk*, *J. Clerk*, *A. Brabanar*. The MacCoigs of Braemar and Crathie must have been numerous at one time; the old genealogies of the Farquharsons mention them as followers of the clan. These minor sept names sometimes disappeared entirely, owing to the adoption by their owners of the wider clan name instead.

RICHARKARIE—*Alex. Irving de Drum*. The Irvines were once large landowners in Cromar and Glengairn. Sir Alex. Irvine had a charter of this property from the Earl of Mar in 1633.

LAWSIE—*Thos. McIntagart*, *J. Gordon*, *Alex. Duncanson*, *Duncan Makkarny* (possibly MacCeatharnaich, cateran's son).

INVERENZE—*John Gordon*.

FABRILE [smithy] DE INVERGELDER—*John Smith*.

The above lists contain a good proportion of the present-day names of Upper Deeside, if we omit the recent importations caused by the growth of Ballater and the

village of Braemar. A few notes on some others, now or at one time common in the locality, may prove of interest.

Abercrombie. This must have been originally a place-name ; it means "outlet of the bent or winding stream." In Gaelic the Deeside Abercrombies are called Macintyre (son of the carpenter), but the reason for this *alias* we have never heard.

Niven or *Nivie.* Gael. Gille Naoimhein, servant of the saint.

Cattanach. The meaning is "Cattan-er" or Clan Chattan man, a name commoner, as might be expected, outside than within the Clan Chattan country.

Michie. A diminutive or pet form of Michael (the *ch* of which is pronounced as in "loch" in Gael. and Scots). The generally received tradition concerning the Michies is that Michael MacDonald, a younger son of a laird of Appin, came to assist the Gordons in their feuds about the end of the 16th century and ultimately settled in Strathdon. His descendants were called by his Christian name, and gradually spread into Deeside and the surrounding parts.

MacConnach. The Eng. of this is MacKenzie, which however is usually taken to mean "son of Kenneth." Gael. Cinead (Kenneth) and Coinneach got confused.

Gruer. Gael. grùdair, a "brewster."

Forbes. There can be no doubt that this is originally a place-name, and that the family of Forbes took their name from the place and not *vice versa*. But what is the meaning? Dr. MacBain points out that the terminal part *-es* (Gael. *-ais*) is common in place-names in Pictland. Dallas, Duffus, Geddes, Kellas may be mentioned, which also have given rise to personal designations in the same way as Forbes. He traces this termination to an old Celtic form meaning "town," so that Forbes is simply "Forb-ton," whatever the first part may signify. (In later Gaelic "town" is expressed by *prefixing* "baile"—Balfour, Balmoral, &c.)

Gillanders, older *Macgillanders.* Servant of (St.) Andrew.

Mackintosh. Gael. Mac-an-tòisich, son of the chief. The Mackintoshes of Braemar considered themselves to be of two different families, the Tir Igny and the Marcaich, and carried the distinction even to the churchyard, where each sept had its own allotted ground; and has so still, the writer is informed. The legends concerning the two branches are told in Grant's *Braes o' Mar*.

Littlejohn. Is of course English, but probably some of the Deeside Littlejohns had Anglicised their names from McInvige. At any rate this name occurs in the Poll Book as a phonetic spelling of MacIain bhig, son of little John.

Milne. In the same way this typically Aberdeenshire name may be partly derived from a Gaelic original. In the great majority of cases it arose doubtless in this way:—"William of the mill" became William Milne. On the Highland borders, however, William Maol (bald William) might easily give rise to the same form. "John Myill in Petty," an entry which is on record in 1502, points in this direction. His name is certainly meant for Bald John. Cp. Canwell, p. 280. In favour of this view is the fact that the *n* of Milne is silent in the vernacular, and that epithet names of this type are characteristic of Aberdeenshire. See under *Alexander More*, p. 274.

Warrack. In Gaelic MacUaraig, which was regarded as the equivalent of Kennedy.

Gillespie. Older MacGillespick. Gael. Gilleasbuig, servant of the bishop. As a Christian name the Gaels used it, for what reason is unknown, as the equivalent of Archibald.

Esson. The older spelling Ayson shows the derivation. It is simply Mackay Anglicised, with *-son* instead of *Mac-*.

Rattray. The Highland Rattrays were located in Perthshire under the Duke of Atholl, but individuals spread into Upper Deeside and Donside.

Allanach. Once very common, especially in Strathdon. They counted themselves Stewarts, and gradually dropped the name Allanach. Locally the race had a great reputation for strength and stature.

Erskine. The Braemar Erskines were really Macgregors who adopted that name when their own was proscribed. See the note on the Deeside Macgregors.

Gall or *Gauld.* The Highlanders called a stranger settled among them by this name. Gael. gall, a foreigner.

II

GAELIC ON DEESIDE

(See page 10)

AT the last census there were 198 Gaelic speakers in Braemar and Crathie out of a population of 1452, 48 in Glenmuick, Tullich, and Glengairn, and 19 in Strathdon. As a living language in daily use Gaelic may be said to be extinct east of the Castleton.

Sir Sam. Forbes in his Description of Aberdeen (about 1715) states that the natives of Braemar speak two languages. If this implies that bi-lingualism was the rule even at that date, it is an over-statement, for forty years later at the trial of a Braemar man in Edinburgh we find a large number of the local witnesses, more especially the common people, giving their evidence through an interpreter. But probably he means no more than that enough English was known by the bigger tenants to enable them to conduct their business in the low country. The ordinary tongue was Gaelic, and continued to be so over both upper parishes for more than a hundred years after. Forbes classes the people of Crathie and Glenmuick with their neighbours to the west as "speaking two languages," so that the inability of the people on the south side of the Dee, about Girnock, to speak Gaelic, which was the case about 1840, may not have been of long standing. We may say that it was spoken or understood everywhere above Culbleen during the 18th century.

When was it spoken further east, in Cromar, Aboyne, Kincardine and on middle Deeside generally? The question is interesting, but hard to solve if an exact date is wanted for any particular locality. We know, of course, from the Book

of Deer and otherwise that the Celtic language was the speech of Aberdeenshire from Buchanness to Ben Muic Dhui as late as 1100 and probably later, but the evidence for determining its disappearance and gradual retreat to the west is extremely scanty. It is generally supposed to have given place to English in the lowlands of the country by about 1300.

The introduction of the new language was owing in the first instance to the victory of Anglo-Norman influences at Court. This movement began in the reign of Malcolm (1057-1093), and continued under his successors, till the aristocracy and the church in this part of the country were in the course of two or three centuries transformed and the southern language and ways of life firmly established. We shall have a word or two to say presently as to the methods by which this was effected; we here merely note the fact that about 1300 the Celtic language was everywhere in the north-east of Scotland retreating towards the hills. The old Celtic *mormaers* and *toiseachs* had become Anglicised Earls and Thaners, and new immigrant families received grants of land from the Crown and spread the new language among their vassals and the dependent population. The new comers were strongly represented on Deeside at an early date. By the 14th century we have Durwards, Irvines, Bissets, Burnetts, Frasers, and Gordons, whose presence meant the triumph of the new feudal ideas over Celtic tribalism, and under whose leadership the natives gradually adopted the Teutonic language.

The chief reminder that Celtic had ever been spoken is to be found in the place-names, and from an examination of them it is possible to form a rough estimate of the date when Gaelic ceased to be understood. The line of argument will be seen from an example or two. Tracing back the name Gartly for instance, we find it in old documents in its present form till the 15th century. About that time, however, it begins to appear as Garntuly and Garintuly. This is *gàradh an tulaich*, "hill town." We know that the dominical lands of Gartly were called Hilltown in English. The argument therefore is that about the time mentioned the meaning of the Gaelic was known in the district.

Camphill in Lumphanan at first sight seems merely the Saxon "camp" and "hill," but the local pronunciation "Camfel" suggests that the real original is lying obscured under phonetic corruption. In 1696 it is written Camfield, which is one stage nearer the Gaelic, but is still unintelligible. The form of 1480, however, Camquhyle, becomes clear. It sounds exactly *càmh choille*, "sloping wood."

In 1390 the Bishop of Aberdeen and Forbes of Forbes had a dispute concerning a certain piece of land in Tullynessle called Lurgyndaspok. The meaning of the word was understood at the time, for it is cogently urged on behalf of the Bishop that as it means in Gaelic "Bishop's leg" or shank the land would not bear that name unless it were his.

These examples are taken from the two books on Place-Names by the late James Macdonald, where many others of the same kind can be found. The labours of this cautious and painstaking investigator in this field led him to consider the question of the extinction of Gaelic, and in this connection he points out that in the upper parts of Dee and Don the names have changed but little, and for the most part are easily explained, but that in the central districts corruptions are more numerous, and that it is often not till the forms of four or five centuries back are recovered that the meaning can be made out. He was of opinion that Gaelic may have been still spoken in the middle parts of the country in the 16th century, not perhaps everywhere, but in the remoter and less accessible quarters. It must be remembered that all the documentary remains which have survived from these times were written by English speakers, and that the old language might have survived for many years in a place without leaving a trace on the records. For instance, Taylor, the Cockney "Water poet," who made an adventurous dash into Scotland in 1618, and penetrated as far as Braemar, incidentally mentions that he lay one night at an Irish [Erse] house in Glenesk in Forfarshire where the people could speak scarcely any English. But for this accidental gleam of light, it would be quite unknown that Gaelic was alive in this quarter, so near the lowlands, at so late a date.

Besides the evidence of place-names, some facts of another kind can be adduced which seem to have a bearing on the

question. We happen to know the names of six tenants of the lands of Tolly in the parish of Clatt in 1511. They are Anguson, Wilson, Anderson, Adamson, Georgeson, and Duncanson. It is pretty certain that these are not true surnames, but examples of the Celtic method of naming by patronymic, and we can say with some confidence that, if these men were not Gaelic speakers themselves, Gaelic was not very far away.

For the same year a list of tenants in Birse has been preserved, in which, though there are examples of true surnames, and some of these of a lowland character, the patronymic or Celtic type is well represented. Thus "Duncan son of Robert, Malcolm son of William, Richard son of Finlay, John son of Duncan," &c., appear to have the same significance as in the case of Tolly in Clatt, namely that Celticism was either still alive in the district or not long extinct.

Further west, in Cromar, there are some names on record at the end of the 16th century which are worth notice. At that time English was certainly well established there; perhaps Gaelic was altogether disused. But if so, it probably had not been for long. The names we refer to are those of certain women who were tried for witchcraft in 1597, during one of the periodical outbreaks of the witch-burning mania. *Ferusche* was one of those who suffered. This is now Ferries or Ferris, and is meant for (Mac)Fear(gh)uis. The pronunciation represented by the old spelling is a close approximation to the Gaelic sound. *Spaldairg* was another. The first part of her name is doubtful, but the second can hardly be other than *dearg*, red. *Trachak* shows the Gael. diminutive ending -ag, seen for example in *Sinnag*, formed from *Sine*, Jane. *Beak* is Gael. *Beathag*, in English Sophia. The cast of these names is Gaelic, and it is worth notice too that they belong to the common people who would no doubt cling longest to the old speech. One of the elders who tried the witches was called *Auchan Glas*, his Christian name being Gael. *Eachann*, in English Hector.

The probability is, as far as a conclusion can be arrived at from the meagre data, that Gaelic ceased to be spoken east of Culbleen sometime between 1500 and 1600. Thus the

moor of Dinnet, which is to-day popularly regarded as the boundary between Lowlands and Highlands, has served that purpose for a longer period than is sometimes supposed. In the 17th century the Privy Council occasionally used the expression "above Culbleen" as equivalent to the Aberdeenshire Highlands, a lawless region where their writs received neither the respect nor the obedience which the Councillors looked for as a matter of course from the English-speaking regions below it. When Pennant, the traveller, visited the district in 1769, he found, coming down from Braemar, that Cromar was regarded as the entrance into the low countries, and was told that the Erse language had been disused in it "for many ages," though it was spoken six miles west in Glengairn.

It may be noticed that in the above remarks we have spoken throughout of "the disappearance of Gaelic" rather than "the disappearance of the Gael." It is true that the latter expression, or at least the theory implied in it, is more commonly current, but there are insuperable difficulties in the way of accepting the view that the change of language meant a change of race or that the lowlands of Aberdeenshire are inhabited by a people of different blood from their Highland neighbours. There is a vague idea floating about that powerful bands of Scandinavian or Teutonic invaders made good their footing at some time on the sea-board and then gradually drove back the aboriginal Celts to the hills. A somewhat modified theory represents the new comers, not as exactly extinguishing or expelling the natives, but as "absorbing" them. In either case the change of language is taken to imply that the lowland population may be correctly described as "Anglo-Saxon," "Teutonic," "Germanic," and the like. "Aberdeenshire," says one authority, "is one of the purest lowland counties, and its people—as may be inferred from their language and physical characteristics—is overwhelmingly of Saxo-Scandinavian origin," and similar statements could be quoted from most of the histories.

It is curious that such a theory, which contradicts at many points the facts of history and human nature, should have won so wide an acceptance. It has of late, however, been subjected to damaging criticism, and the trend of recent

opinion is away from it and towards the essential Celticism of the population, not of Aberdeenshire only, but of Scotland as a whole. The invasion theory in its extreme form is at once pulled up by the certain fact that in the 12th century, as already noticed, Aberdeenshire was occupied everywhere, except possibly in the town of Aberdeen itself, by a Gaelic-speaking people. The Scandinavian raiders, who effected permanent settlements elsewhere in Scotland, had no success in this quarter. The 12th century is well within historical times, and no great movement of this character could have taken place without our knowing it. Believers in the "Anglo-Saxon" theory are therefore obliged to look to the 13th and 14th centuries for the period when the Celts were driven to the wall, absorbed, or expelled. Now it is certainly true that in this part of Scotland the Celtic system of society failed to withstand the new forces which attacked it in those centuries, but the precise character of the hostile forces is not always correctly represented. The phenomenon was really the triumph of a new political and social type of civilisation. From the Celtic point of view the Kings of Scotland had become quite denationalised: the feudal system was the ideal which they favoured, and they turned to England and the south for the men to carry out the changes in church and state which they steadily aimed at. English barons received grants of land as opportunity offered, English churchmen filled the highest offices and remodelled the old native ecclesiastical organisation, English and foreign traders were encouraged to settle in the towns. But the revolution which was gradually accomplished under the leadership of these Anglo-Normans was, with a few sporadic exceptions, a peaceful revolution. To think of the strangers as a foreign army, organised to despoil and destroy the natives, seems altogether a misconception. They were there as individuals, under the patronage of the rulers of the land, and no doubt chiefly with an eye to their own fortune. The disappearance or dispossession of the original inhabitants was no part of the plan. Of what use would tracts of land have been to the Anglo-Norman potentate without the people who made them profitable? He would bring with him his group of personal followers who supported him and were favoured by him in turn, but the bulk of the people remained undisturbed.

The numbers of the alien have probably been much exaggerated, the idea doubtless being that nothing short of great numerical preponderance would be adequate to account for so striking a phenomenon as the total disappearance of the old language. Here again, however, some essential facts seem to be neglected, the chief of which is that the new language was the tongue of the upper classes. In the 13th century, as in the 20th, when a language becomes unfashionable its doom is sealed. The great lords and their retinues spoke no Gaelic, nor did the clergy in whose hands the care of education lay, nor the merchants and traders of the towns. In course of time their influence would prove irresistible, and the lower classes would gradually acquire the speech of their betters. Languages are sensitive to other forces than mere numbers. The same process can be seen going on to-day in the Highlands and Ireland as we may suppose went on in Aberdeenshire in those distant centuries. The Gaelic-speaking area is constantly diminishing, not by any invasion of English speakers, but under the attractive force of the more useful language. Similarly in the North-East of Scotland the alien was able to impose his language on the people because he represented a more highly developed civilisation, and not because of his numbers, which according to the best historical evidence were never very great.

The distinction therefore of Highlander and Lowlander is more a distinction of language than of race, and the probability is that the people of Aberdeenshire as a whole are in the main descended from the Gaelic-speaking Celts whom we find inhabiting it at the beginning of authentic history.

The old language has left considerable traces on the vocabulary of Lowland Scots, and, as might be expected, these are more marked as the Gaelic-speaking line is approached. In the upper parts of Deeside, where Scots is spoken, a good many Gaelic words are in use. Most of these will be found in Jamieson's Dictionary or in Wright's Dialect Dictionary, but there are some which seem to have escaped both these collections. In West Aberdeenshire one hears, or heard till lately, the tit-lark called "snatack." This is the Gael. *snàdaig*. "Stramlach," a long trailing

slender thing, is G. *striamlach*. "Amulan more," which is sometimes applied to the big yoke to either end of which the swingle-trees are attached, is formed from *amal mór*. "Glurich," impudent, is probably G. *gleadhrach*. "Mugg-anach," a defeat, seems to be connected with or based on *mùg*, gloom. "Grenock," a small bit of anything, is G. *gràineag*. "Kerrach," a small bit of peat, is in the primary part the same as G. *caoran*, of the same meaning. Words like "frenock," a small piece, "rootack," a long pipe, "perlack," a blow, and many others of the same type, show a free use of the Gael. diminutive *-ag*, characteristic of a time when Gaelic was being forgotten but when Gaelic twists were given to English words, as one hears "boy-an" for little boy, etc., in Easter Ross to-day.

A careful examination of the vocabulary and phonetics of the dialect of West Aberdeenshire would probably reveal considerable Gaelic influence. Has it been noticed, for example, that "whatever" is very commonly used as an adverb, like the "whateffer" of the North and West Highlands?

III

THE DEESIDE MACGREGORS

(See page 22)

THE original habitat of this famous clan was in Argyll and Perth—principally the districts of Breadalbane and Atholl. When and how some of them spread north and obtained a footing on Deeside has been differently related. According to popular accounts there were two branches, the Macgregors of the Smoke (Griogairich na Smùide) and the Macgregors of the Lime (G. an Aol). Miss Murray Macgregor prints in her History of the Clan a MS. account of the Braemar families of the name by "John Gregory." The author is otherwise unknown, and the document is undated, but from internal evidence it seems to have been written not long after 1700. According to him the Macgregors of the Lime came from the south under the patronage and protection of the Earls of Mar about 1400, and soon were able to acquire "four of the best towns in Bremarr—Cluny and Kilach, Dalchork and Balachbuidh," besides Inverey. Their nickname arose from their being the first to make use of lime for agricultural purposes in those Highland regions. They burnt it and applied it to the land, raising great crops, "to the inexpressible astonishment of the whole country." Gregory's object is evidently to show that his clansmen, far from being caterans and ne'er-do-weels, were the first scientific farmers. His account is marked throughout by strong hostility against the Farquharsons, whose founders he represents as mere "cow-stealers and raisers of herships," whereas the first Macgregor Laird of Inverey was a man of such fascination that his patron "the Earl of Marr was never happy but when Inverey was with

him." In the course of time, however, by force and cunning the Farquharsons succeeded in ousting the honourable members of his clan from all their fair possessions west of Crathie.

Most of this story is pure romance. The names of the principal landholders in Braemar and Crathie are known about 1500,* and none that can be identified as Macgregors are to be found there, nor do they otherwise appear on record.

The truth is that Macgregors did not figure in Deeside history till a much later date, and their emigration to the north was owing to the critical experiences which they passed through in the reign of James VI. The savage proceedings carried out by him against this clan need not be referred to here further than to point out that large numbers of Macgregors fled from their native seats, seeking for a living wherever it was to be found. They gravitated most naturally to the north, where the chronic clan feuds and quarrels had reached a height that was indistinguishable from civil war. Some of the more disreputable went to swell the ranks of "broken men," living by cattle-lifting and robbery; others sought protection and employment in a more regular way under the northern chiefs and lords, who quietly turned a blind eye on the laws and ordinances, pains and penalties, by which King and Council sought to forbid landlords from having any dealings with the proscribed clan. So far from joining or assisting the Royal boycott, these potentates would appear to have competed with each other for the services of the wandering Ishmaels. The particulars of one negotiation have been preserved,† which, though it belongs to a later time than the period of which we are speaking, illustrates the sort of arrangement that was common both before and after, and helps to explain how the Macgregors managed to survive in spite of the best efforts of the State to destroy them.

Letter from the Earl of Atholl to Gregor Mcindowie [Macgregor] in Gaulaurk in Strathavene :—

"Assured Freind, I am informed by Donald Macgregor that you haue ane intentione to cum and leive in this Cuntrie and that

* See Note I.

† Miss Macgregor's *History*, vol. ii., p. 131.

you are more desirous to leive in my lands then in any odyr man's landis Therefor thos are to assure you that there is no landis that I haue that can be spairit but you shall haue it to live in. In the mean tyme I desire you to cum and speack with me. Untill which tyme I shall remaine

Your ffreind

Tulimatt May ye 6, 1655."

Atholl

The result of the interview seems to have been satisfactory, for six months later Gregor Mcindowie has a charter of the lands of Easter Drumnacharrie in the Earldom of Atholl.

Soon after 1600, considerable bodies of Macgregors had taken refuge in the north. Their chief protectors were the Clan Chattan and the Marquis of Huntly. The Privy Council called the latter to account in 1611 for sheltering them on his lands; he did not deny the fact, but pretended that they were there against his will; and the Councillors got no further satisfaction. In the same year they appear for the first time on Abergeldie, also a Gordon possession, and afterwards one of their favourite haunts, from which the Council struggled for many years to expel them. They make their début on Deeside in highly characteristic fashion:

"Complaint by George and James Rossis, tenants to William Gordon of Abiryeldie of his lands of Eistoun and Loichmaynis [in Cromar] that, albeit the reset and intercommuning 'with that unhappie and rebellious race and handfull of wicked people callit the clan Gregour' is strictly discharged, yet on 27th August last Nicol Davie in Muirtoun, accompanied by ten or twelve persons of the said clan and others to the number of fourscore persons, all armed with swords, gauntlets, platesleeves, bows, darlochs and dirks, 'maist feirslic set uponn the said complenairis' at the market of St. Marie's Fair, with great 'rungis and battonis' felled them to the ground, and would have slain them if they had not been relieved. Indeed there had been such a tumult in the fair that all the people had dissolved without making further market." (*Privy Council Reg.*, 1611.)

The strength of the *entente cordiale* established between the Gordons and the Macgregors was revealed in 1634 when a savage vendetta arose between the Crichtons and the Gordons consequent upon the mysterious death of the Marquis of Huntly's son in the conflagration of Frendraught.

"Thair cam in to the countrie," says Spalding, "about 600 Hielanders of the Clangrigour, Clan Chamaron and utheris, and opinlie declairit thay had takin pairt with the Gordons, the friendis of the lait brynt laird of Rothiemay, and wold sie the samen revengit." These Macgregors belonged to the Roro branch of the clan, and in return for this service some of the leaders obtained settlements in Strathavon in Banffshire—at Dalnabo, Dalvorar, and Gaulrig, where they founded families that gave some distinguished soldiers to the British army in the succeeding centuries.* The close connexion which they maintained with their patrons is evidenced in a deed executed in 1711 at Gordon Castle by which with all due formality John and James M'Grigor, sons of Grigor M'Grigor of Delivorar, bind and oblige themselves and their heirs and successors to call themselves Gordons for ever, "and that both in word and write."

Close on the private Crichton feud followed the wars of the Covenant, a struggle big enough to make the last man that Huntly could put into the field of value. The Macgregors eagerly supported him on the Royalist side, and their services were of such importance that, unlike most of the King's men, they emerged from "the Troubles" richer than they began. Tradition says that it was at this time that the Glengairn Macgregors became established as lairds on part of the Gordon lands there, at Inverenzie, Dalfad and thereabout. This is probably in the main correct, but it is certain that others of the clan owed their lands to the Earls of Mar, and at an earlier date too. There is a charter of 1633 from the Earl of Mar to Thomas Erskine of Rinabrouch in Glengairn, the name Erskine, we are told, being an assumed one, instead of Macgregor (in accordance with the law of 1603 which commanded the clansmen to discard their own surname and choose another—in this case the family name of the Earls being taken). In the public records of the district "Erskine *alias* Macgregor" occurs more than once, so that "John Gregory's" narrative, referred to above, contains this amount of truth that some

* Sir James Macgregor, Director General of the Army medical department, whose monument stood till recently in Marischal College quadrangle, was of this stock.

of the Deeside Macgregors owed their position to the favour of the Earl of Mar, though he greatly antedates their appearance on the Dee.

At one time or other in the 17th century the following lands were in the possession of owners bearing the name—Auchallater in Braemar; Wester Micras in Crathie; Tornawarran in Abergeldie; Belnabo, Rinabrouch, Richarkarie, Ardoch, Dalfad, Torran, Inverenzie in Glengairn; Ballater in Tullich. Though these lairdships were fairly numerous, most of them were small, and they gradually passed into the hands of the richer and bigger lairds. Macgregors of Ballochbuie figure in most of the local guide-books, the last of them as the hero of a quite incredible story. He sold, it is said, his estate to one of the Farquharsons for a tartan plaid—a transaction which is commemorated on the stone erected by Queen Victoria on the property when it passed into her possession, “The bonniest plaid in Scotland.” There may have been tenants of the name at one time in this place, but public records seem to be quite silent as to its ever having been owned by a Macgregor.

Sheltered among the mountains of Glengairn and fortified by a tenantry mostly of the same name and blood, these Macgregor lairds were the leaders of a little sept or miniature clan that presented a bold front to all and sundry. In character and habits they were Highlanders to the core—proud, spirited, and clannish, devoted to the old faith and the old dynasty, famous for their readiness “with word and blow, but the blow first.” Their enemies, it is true, would likely have added another less pleasing feature of character, which may be described in the words of Gillicallum Macpherson concerning another clan: “When at war with the Macintoshes bolt your door once, when at peace bolt it twice.” The most famous of the race was Malcolm, commonly known as Calum Og of Ballater, an addition which he or an ancestor made to the Glengairn lands, but which did not remain long in their possession. Apart from tradition, the little that has hitherto been known of him is contained in the short notice in Blakhal’s *Narration* (Spalding Club), but since the publication of Miss Macgregor’s researches several interesting particulars can be added to his *dossier*.

In February, 1692, he is denounced as a "lawless man" (Records of Justiciary). Four months later, "Malcolme McGregor of Balater, Alexander McGregor in Tilliechurder are indyted along with Gordon of Abergeldie, etc., at the instance of Robert Stewart of Innerchat [in Birse], for burning his house," etc. Some years afterwards he is found borrowing 700 merks from Farquharson of Invercauld and 280 from Grant of Grant. Following on the ecclesiastical changes introduced at the Revolution, there was held in 1704 an inquisition of Roman Catholics in Glenmuick and the neighbourhood. The minister of the parish, the Rev. James Robertson, in presenting to the Presbytery his list of papists, priests, and apostates, puts Calum at the head of it for boldness and inveteracy. He keeps mass and Popish conventicles in his house. He has sent his eldest son to Douai to be trained for the priesthood. He has lately erected a crucifix on a little hill near to his house to be adored by all the neighbourhood. He is worth about 500 merks per annum, but much of his fortune "is now adjudged upon decreits obtained against him for robbing the Laird of Glenkindie's house [the Strachans were a strong anti-Stuart family and old enemies of the Macgregors], and other such like barbarities. Only he makes a considerable deal of money by blackmail, extorted from several low country parishes, such as Fordun, Strachan, Fettercairn, etc., under pretence of protecting them." One of his escapades touched the worthy minister to the quick. Calum had stepped over from Gairnside to Allanaquoich one day to a wedding feast where there was a large company present, and had contributed his share towards the entertainment of the guests in a unique manner. "After he had at first ridiculed the protestant religion, he next went to his knees and with a loud voice uttered a deal of horrid blasphemie, pretending to personate protestant ministers in their prayers and then fell a preaching, to the great astonishment of the beholders." The warmth of the minister's feelings and language is no doubt due to the fact that it was at him that Calum's caricature was levelled. A year or two before, the minister of the three upper parishes, an Episcopalian, had been deposed "for gross negligence in preaching, etc.," and Robertson, his successor, the first Pres-



OLD CHURCH-YARD AND RUINS OF CHAPEL AT DALFAD, GLENGAIRN.

byterian minister, no doubt introduced a pulpit manner which was new to those parts, and which, if we may judge from a contemporary satire, *Scots Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed*, must have presented considerable temptations to the lively laird of Ballater. In the narrative by John Gregory, mentioned at the beginning of this note, Calum also figures.

"The lairds of Inverenzie," he says, "were in opulent circumstances until at last when one of them, young Mallcom, one of the most valiant men in his day, by misfortune was inveigled in a process of law before the Court of Session, in defence of which process he almost spent his all, so high was the spirit of this brave man. After being told by his advocates that he would inevitably lose, unless he would sell some part of his estate in order to maintain the cause, so much perplexed was he that he did not know how to behave; but upon retiring to his room in Edinburgh he betook himself to his pair of trumps and there was making a tune to himself by way of recreation. The lawyers now finding, as they thought, that he would be obliged to sell his estate or at least a good part of it, they would go and advise him to advertise the same. Upon their approaching the room they were confounded to see him in such top spirits as he seemed to be; however, so dexterous was he at that kind of music that the lawyers insisted on his playing on, and after some hours play and a handsome treat no doubt, they left him without ever advising him to dispose of any part of his estate; and next day, or a few days after, upon considering the high spirits of such a brave man, gained his plea."

His descendants continued true to the traditions of their house to the last. One of his grandsons, Captain Macgregor of Inverenzie, mustered his little band of followers on the haugh at Dalfad and marched off to join Lord Lewis Gordon's regiment in the '45, and if Grant's *Legends* is to be believed two others perished in the Gairn within sight of their own house as they were returning from a cattle-lifting expedition in the west.

It was probably soon after this that they had to part with their estates, a misfortune which in view of their manner of life was plainly inevitable. In the Roman Catholic burying ground at Dalfad a rude flat tombstone bears the inscription,

"G. M. G. 1734.

Here lies John Grierson

Who died the 2nd day of May 1787."

The second name is said to refer to one of the last of the lairds. Though no longer figuring as landed men, the race did not become extinct on Deeside, and there is, or at least there was in existence some years ago, a manuscript account of the doings of Captain Macgregor of Culloden fame, carefully cherished by his descendants.

THE CATERAN MACGREGORS.—The landed Macgregors with whom we have been dealing, wild and reckless as they were, might pass for law-abiding citizens compared with some others of the name who kept Deeside in a ferment about the beginning of the 17th century. These were "broken men" of the clan, whose leader was Patrick Macgregor *alias* Gilderoy or Gilroy, "the red lad," the hero of the ballad, "Gilderoy was a bonnie boy." Whether the popular rhyme concerning the burning of Culbleen and the harrying of Cromar refers to his depredations or not, it is known that the centre of his operations was in that neighbourhood. The so-called Rob Roy's cave near Loch Kinnord probably owes its name to him, and the Cairn of Gilderoy in Strathdon is another reminiscence of this notorious freebooter. In a proclamation issued by the Privy Council (Mar., 1636) it is stated that

"Patrick Macgregor and others hes associat and combynned themselves togidder, hes thair residence neere to the forrests of Culblene, Glentanar, and in the mountains of Tullich, Glengarne, Strathdie, Strathdone and Cabrach, and from these parts they come in the darknes of the night down to the incountrie, falls unawars upon the houses and goods of his Majesteis poore subjects and spoyles thame of thair goods, and, being full handed with the spoyle they goe backe agane to the bounds forsaid where they keepe mercat of thair goods peaceablie and uncontrolled, to the disgrace of law and justice. For the remeid whair of the Lords of Secreit Counsell charge all landslords and heretours, where thir brokin lymmars has thair resset, abode, and starting holes, to rise, putt thaimselffes in armes, and to hunt, follow, and persew, shout and raise the fray, and with fire and sword to persew the saids theeves, and never to leave aff thair persute till they be ather apprehended or putt out of the countrie."

Impudent and systematic spoliation like this would of course have been impossible had the band not had supporters

among the people. A fortnight after this proclamation, another follows directed against those who "reset, supplee, assist, maintain or defend" Gilderoy and his followers, or who "hoord thair goods, blocke, buy or bargain with them thereanent." More than a hundred and fifty of these resetters are mentioned by name, the great majority belonging to the Upper Deeside parishes. The list supplies a highly instructive example of the difficulties with which the forces of law and order had to contend in bringing the lawless to justice. It embraces all classes of the community, beginning with "brewsters" and brewster women (with whom the country seems to have been more than well supplied) and even some representatives of the Cyprian sisterhood, and rising up through cottars, tenants, and tacksmen to the Laird of Abergeldie on the summit of the social pyramid. He, like his father before him, was the chief local supporter of the Macgregors, "broken" or unbroken; but in almost every "town" from Aboyne to Balmoral, Gilderoy had his secret allies.

The Council go on to issue a commission to Lords Forbes and Pitsligo, Farquharson of Invercauld and others to pursue Gilderoy, to arrest and deal with resetters, and in short to abate the plague by any means that seemed likely to be successful. A reward of £1000 is offered "in present and thankful payment" for the presentation of Gilderoy and his chief followers alive or dead, and a long series of proclamations and fulminations concludes with a rather amusing confession of weakness:—

"And whereas in the execution of the commissioun the saids commissioners will be sometimes constrained to employ persons not altogidder answerable and obedient to law and justice, and the Lords of the Council being willing if thir person sall do anie worthie and memorable service that they sall have some taste of his Majesties favour for thair panes, theirfoir the saids Lords promises that if anie person will take and bring in a more notorious and powerful lymmar nor himselffe and find caution for good behaviour he sall have his Majesties gracious favour and pardon for all bygane offences."

This is the method which Spalding describes as that of "garring one devil ding another."

Gilderoy's capture was finally effected by one of the chief enemies of his race, Lord Lorne afterwards Marquis of Argyll, somewhere in the west country. He was taken, with nine of his band, to Edinburgh to be tried. There they were speedily sentenced to "be hangit quhill they be deid ; and Patrick Gilroy and Johnne Forbes sall be hangit upon ane gibbet, quhilk gibbet sall be advanced ane grit degrie heicher nor the gibbet quhairupone the rest sall suffer."

Though Gilderoy was thus well disposed of, matters were not greatly mended on Deeside. His brother promptly served himself heir to the leadership of the *Gillean Ruadh*, and when he was captured and executed in turn, still another of the same brood stepped forward to captain the band. Equally steadfast was the Laird of Abergeldie in his defiance of King and Council. He again figures in a new list of resettlers as one who "has supplued and intercommoned with the brokin lymmars, furnished them meate, drink, poulder, lead, lunt, and all others things necessar, keeps intelligence with them be word, writt and message, and ministers unto them all kynde of confort and assistance."

Deeside was at last relieved of these Macgregor desperadoes by the outbreak of the Civil war in 1639. They found employment with the anti-Covenanting forces, but so bad was their character that the more moderate Royalists doubted if the credit and strength of their cause were not injured by the presence of such auxiliaries.

Though they left no successors who operated on quite so daring and magnificent a scale, the trade of spulzie continued to have its devotees on Deeside, as everywhere else in the Highlands. After the commotions of the 17th century, when lawlessness reached its height, the forces of order gradually proved the stronger and the business might be described as a declining industry. Still the practice of cattle-lifting had been an established Highland institution from the earliest times (the first Act against "thift, stouthreaffe, and violent and maisterfull oppressioun" dating from as far back as 1384), and so it continued to the last, in fact till the Highlanders were disarmed after Culloden. The local caterans levied their toll on the surrounding lowlands ; Deeside itself was preyed upon by the bands whose headquarters lay further west, especially

by the Lochaber men, who were reckoned the most finished experts in their profession. The lairds and the law did their best to protect the industrious tenant, but never, as long as the clan system lasted, with perfect success. In fact, the insecurity pertaining to live stock had to be accepted as one of the unavoidable risks of ordinary Highland life. As the Gaelic proverb had it,* “I took my milch-cows to the fold ; with me to-day, from me to-morrow.” Even in the cradle the young cateran heard the praises of his future pastime and was inoculated with the proper spirit. There is a sweet lullaby,† once heard in the Lochaber district, the first verse of which runs—

“Cagaran, cagaran, cagaran gaolach,
Cagaran foghainteach, fear de mo dhaoine ;
Goididh e gobhair dhomh, goididh e caorich ;
Goididh e capull is mart o na raointean.

“Hushaby, bairnie, my bonnie wee laddie,
When ye’re a man ye shall follow your daddie,
Lift me a coo, and a goat, and a wether,
Bringing them hame to your minnie thegither.”

Such was the immemorial antiquity of the practice of cattle-lifting, and so closely allied with the methods of clan warfare, that the caterans almost claimed a sort of toleration from public opinion. When Donald Cameron, the leader of what was probably the last band in the country, was caught and condemned to death in 1752 at Kinloch Rannoch, General Stewart records that “at his execution he dwelt with surprise and indignation on his fate. He had never committed murder, nor robbed man or house, or taken anything but cattle off the grass of those with whom he was at feud.”

* Forbes, *Gael. Names of Beasts*.

† *The Old Highlands*, p. 339.

IV

“COLONEL ANNE”

(See page 52)

THE story of Colonel Anne, as given in Chapter VI., was current from about the time of the Rebellion. Scott accepted her military exploits and “Amazonian propensities” as true, and incorporated them in the *Tales of a Grandfather*. It is right, however, to state that the Higher Criticism has recently been at work on the legend, and has shown that a loyal, resolute, and high-spirited young girl has been grossly caricatured. Barring the loss of the picturesque anecdote of her husband’s surrender, the real facts concerning her are an improvement on the fiction. They may be given in the words of Mr. A. M. Mackintosh, who records his investigation into the matter in his *History of the Mackintoshes*:—“The romantic circumstances attending the raising of the Mackintosh regiment are well known; but the part played by the heroic wife of the Chief is usually misrepresented. This was Anne, daughter of John Farquharson of Invercauld. In 1745, she was only twenty years of age. Her father was now a friend of the Government, but most of her name in and about Braemar were devoted Jacobites, and it was probably through them that she became imbued with the notions which she so conscientiously and nobly followed out. Sir Æneas Mackintosh’s MS. throws considerable light on the events in which she was concerned, and may no doubt be taken as trustworthy, the writer, who was her husband’s nephew, being much with her in after years. ‘Pitying the Prince for his misfortunes which he had not brought upon himself,’ she took steps soon after the commencement of the

Rising for embodying her husband's clan. Her summons was quickly answered; a strong, well-armed battalion was formed, and placed under the command of Alexander Macgillivray of Dunmaglass, whom the lady had called to her aid. Sir Walter Scott says: ‘She rode with a man's bonnet on her head, a tartan riding-habit richly laced, and pistols at her saddle-bow.’ Another writer speaks of her as figuring largely in the battle of Falkirk, and describes her as riding at the head of her men there in the costume mentioned by Scott. It is only just to the memory of one of the noblest and gentlest of her sex to state that she was guilty of none of these proceedings. The coarse, lying *History of the late Rebellion* by James Ray, a volunteer in Cumberland's army, is perhaps the authority for some of these statements. She saw the Mackintosh regiment but once after it was raised, and was at Moy the whole time from its departure to the south till after the battle of Culloden. . . . Her portrait by Allan Ramsay, taken a few years after this period, and still in excellent condition, shows her to have been a somewhat delicate-looking girl, with a retiring, modest look, elegant figure, and rather high forehead.”

As regards “the rout of Moy,” her share in it consisted in having the perspicacity or good fortune to select an able and determined man as commander of the little party which engineered, or at least executed, the exploit. Mr. Mackintosh tells that the gallant smith, known locally as Captein nan Coig—captain of the five—was made an officer in the regiment, and that his sword is still preserved in the district, “as is his memory.” His anvil, with a suitable Gaelic inscription, is to be seen at Moy Hall.

BRAEMAR AFTER CULLODEN

(See page 57)

THE devotion with which the men of Highland Deeside followed the cause of the Stuarts was but poorly rewarded by Fortune. In the wars of the Covenant and Montrose the balance of loss and gain was much against them, while in the war of the Revolution they suffered perhaps more severely than any others, if we except the unfortunates of Glencoe. Inverey had his house burned and his lands wasted; and the whole country about Abergeldie and Strathdee was thoroughly devastated. The whig General complacently records that he "burned twelve miles of very fertile Highland country, at least 1200 or 1400 houses." After the '15 the common people seem to have fared somewhat better, the attention of the Government being directed more against the leaders, especially the Earl of Mar, whose estates were forfeited. A general disarming Act was indeed passed, but the execution of it was lethargic and inefficient, as was seen 30 years later, and such arms as were surrendered were, in General Wade's own language, "broken and useless and worth little more than the value of the iron."

There was no danger, however, of similar leniency in 1746; England's alarm had been too great for that. After accounts had been settled with the Stuart forces at Culloden, the whole fabric of Celtic feudalism was systematically attacked and destroyed. The heritable jurisdictions of the chiefs over their people were abolished, and military tenure of land forbidden. These measures aimed at the landlords.

For the tenantry, Acts forbidding the carrying of arms and proscribing the Highland dress were passed. Even the bagpipe was declared to be an instrument of war. The terms of the oath administered were :—

“I, A. B., do swear I have not nor shall have in my possession any gun, sword, or arm whatsoever, and never use tartan, plaid, or any part of the Highland garb ; and if I do may I be cursed in my undertakings, family, and property ; may I never see my wife, nor children, nor relations ; may I be killed in battle as a fugitive coward, and lie without burial in a strange land far from the graves of my forefathers and kindred.”

Some of the Hanoverian leaders in Scotland entered a protest against the needless severity, or rather brutality, of the Act ; but they were disregarded, and against the rebellious clans in particular it was strictly enforced.

Mar Castle was acquired from Farquharson of Invercauld and a garrison established there ; but, as it was considered necessary to keep an eye on the people in their remotest corners, posts were established also at Inchrory, Ribbalchlaggan in Glengairn, at the Spital of Glenshee, in Glenclunie, and at Dubrach above the Linn of Dee. From each of these, small detachments of soldiers patrolled the country, looking out for “thieves,” *i.e.*, the professional caterans who were the last to give up their arms and accept the new *régime*. and spying for the forbidden tartan. Regular reports were sent up by the officers to the Secretary of State in London. A collection of these will be found in Col. Allardyce's *Historical Papers*, giving a good idea of the state of the country at the time and the sort of duties that fell to the Redcoats. One would have expected that such policeman work would have been little to the taste of English officers, but such is not the impression that the reports convey. It may be, however, that a show of zeal was considered advisable in view of the sentiments at head-quarters. The feelings of the natives under the new dispensation remain unrecorded, except in tradition, which reports that the inevitable was for the most part quietly accepted, but that the humiliation was bitter. A picture of the situation in the years immediately succeeding Culloden can be formed from the more significant of these military reports.

"I beg leave to observe that 3 or 4 days' patrolling wears out a pair of shoes . . . All is quiet : we have not seen one man in arms or in the Highland dress (Braemar Barracks, July, 1749). Two orderly men apprehended two Highlanders in kilts, but in passing near a village the inhabitants, mostly women, got hold of one of the soldiers and the prisoner made his escape (Loch Rannoch, July, 1749). I apprehended a man for wearing the plaid and sent him to Aberdeen. The Sergeant is now returned and informs me that he carry'd the prisoner before the Sheriff. The Sheriff said that it was only a dyed blanket and not a plaid. The Serg. asked the Sheriff if the people might wear their plaids if dyed, the Sheriff told him that the intent of the Act was not to oppress the poor, and dismissed the prisoner (Braemar Barracks, Aug. 10). Since my last I have taken up and sent to Aberdeen another Highlander for having a plaid of different colours, which I think the Sheriff cannot well call a blanket, as he was pleased to call the other (Aug. 1749). We had a race after a Highlander who appeared in Highland dress and completely armed, he fairly outran all the party, and as he was going into a wood we fired upon him but miss'd him, but I imagine we shall see him no more in that dress (Braemar, Sept., 1749). Lieut. Moody at Corgarff has taken up 4 Highlanders and is to send them to Aberdeen (Oct., 1749). Nothing extraordinary has happened since my last, save only I seiz'd a Durk from one John Michy, forester to Lord Braco (Feb., 1750). A soldier found in a wood three french Bayonets, a Gun Barrell, and a dirk (Braemar). One of the soldiers of this garrison had his fingers cut by a fellow in the country on Wednesday last ; the soldier says it was because he would not drink the Pretender's health (Corgarff, 1750). I understand there is a great many arms yet in this country. I have made all enquiry I can, but as yet have not been able to find any of them (Braemar, 1750)."

Even three years after Culloden the clansmen had not given up hope that the "star of their fate" and the Stuarts' might rise once again. One July day the garrison were astonished to perceive a defiant, tartaned figure strutting past the castle in full view of all. His name (which we could have wished to know) is unrecorded, but whoever he was, his object was unmistakeable. Seizure and swift dispatch to Aberdeen promptly descend on the culprit, but it is felt that there is something unusual in the air, and investigation has to be made. The officer in charge presently reports the explanation :—"The country people

have good news, as they call it, amongst them . . . that the Pretender is landed in Long Island with 20,000 men, *which spirits them up greatly.*

THE MURDER OF SERGEANT DAVIES.—The report from the Castle for Oct. 1st, 1749, contains the first intimation of a tragedy, which led five years later to two men being tried for murder in Edinburgh before the Court of Justiciary. The proceedings at the trial were published in 1831 by Sir Walter Scott, who was acquainted in his youth with one of the counsel on the occasion. "The Sergeant of the party at Dubrach," says the officer, "has been missing ever since Thursday morning. I am much afraid the poor man is murdered, as he was very active in his duty, and two days before that he was in pursuit of five men which appeared in arms and in the Highland garb." Three days later he adds: "I have had a sergeant and 10 men in search of the missing man, but can hear nothing of him. My reasons for suspecting that he is murdered are as he was very alert and diligent in his duty and" The evidence against the two men who were ultimately arrested and tried was not strong enough to secure a conviction; and so the problem of the death of the Sergeant was never officially solved. There is reason to believe, however, that had the authorities been able to produce all the facts that were known among the people, the men could not have escaped. We shall first give the account of the murder that can be gathered from the evidence at the trial, and then fill up the lacunæ from the traditions of the district.

Sergeant Arthur Davies, of Gen. Guise's regiment, was stationed during the summer of 1749 with a detachment of men at Dubrach in Glendee. Twice a week it was his duty to patrol the hills to the south and south-east, and meet about the head of Gleney a similar party whose headquarters were in Glenshee. The route which he and his men were in the way of taking from their station at Dubrach struck south-east into the hills, crossed Glen Cristie and Glen Connie till Gleney was reached, and thereafter proceeded south to the top of the glen. Their beat thus traversed a wild and remote country. The Glenshee corporal testified that he would not

venture on it alone, and that even with his party he was not without fear. To Davies, however, the solitude had a particular attraction as affording him the better opportunity of a shot at the deer, of which sport he was passionately fond. His practice indeed was to leave his men when they had got to suitable ground, and "follow his game alone." At that time, and for nearly a hundred years after, there were some small farms in Gleney, the *larachs* of which may probably still be seen. The highest of these was Altalait, occupied by John Grant. They were not far distant from the route that the soldiers took.

Besides being a sportsman, Davies was a considerable dandy. He was dressed in a blue coat and a vest of "stript lutstring," wore two gold rings on his fingers, large silver buckles on his shoes, silver knee-buckles, two dozen silver buttons on his vest, and carried a silver watch with a silver seal, and a purse with fifteen and a half gold guineas in his pocket. "He used to take out his purse and show the gold, and even when he was playing with children," according to his wife's testimony, "he would frequently take it out and rattle it for their diversion." Such a figure must have been something of a novelty on the hills of Braemar.

Thus accoutred, the unfortunate man left Dubrach before daybreak on the 28th September, followed soon after by four privates of the post. He had his gun and ammunition with him, his intention being to keep at some distance from the men and "follow his sport." All of them made for Gleney, and the rendezvous with the Glenshee party. Soon after sunrise John Grower, Inverey, came across Davies in Glen Connie, or rather Davies came across him. Grower "had gone out for his horses to lead in the corns and met with the Sergeant, of whom he had some acquaintance before, and he had at that time a *good deal of conversation with him*, particularly with reference to a tartan coat which the Sergeant had observed him to drop and after strictly enjoining him not to use it again, dismissed him." Going on his way, Davies is next heard of at the head of Gleney, where he met the Glenshee corporal. After some talk, they parted, each of them setting out on the return journey to his headquarters. The four privates had completed the round by 4 o'clock, reaching

Dubrach again at that hour, but Davies never returned, and, as far as his friends could learn, never was seen again.

The night before the day when he disappeared, two men, Duncan Terig *alias* Clerk and Alex. Bain MacDonald, had slept in the above mentioned John Grant's house at Altalait in Gleney. Clerk's father was farmer in Milton of Inverey not far off; Macdonald was forester to Lord Braco, and lived in Allanaquoich on the other side of the Dee. According to Grant, they rose early in the morning and set off to the hills (where Davies also was hunting) after deer. Both carried guns, though only MacDonald had permission to do so, and Clerk wore the forbidden plaid, a grey tartan with red in it. Suspicion fell on these two as the murderers of Davies, but it was not till 1754, five years after, that they were brought to trial. The Crown relied mainly on the evidence of two witnesses and on certain suspicious circumstances. Clerk's sweetheart was said to have been seen wearing Davies's rings, and some of his property was traced to MacDonald's possession. Clerk also, "though he was not possesst of any visible funds or effects which could enable him to stock a farm before the period of the murder, yet soon thereafter took a lease of farms," for which he paid a considerable rental. But other evidence made out his father to be a man of means.

The first witness was a young man Macpherson *alias* MacGillas, in Inverey. The story he told was peculiar. About a year after the Englishman's disappearance, he said, a vision of a man appeared to him announcing himself as the ghost of Sergeant Davies, and requesting him to go to the hill of Cristie in Gleney and bury his bones. On his asking who had committed the murder he got the answer that it was Clerk and MacDonald. At the specified spot he found human remains, which he recognised from the clothing and other things to be those of the Sergeant. The rings, silver ornaments, and money were all gone. With the help of one Donald Farquharson, the body was buried where it lay, the sentiment of those whom he consulted being all for concealment, because, "as it would not be carried to a kirk unkent, the same might hurt the country, being under the suspicion of being a rebel country." On being asked what

language the ghost spoke in, Macpherson replied, "In as good Gaelic as ever I heard in Lochaber." The counsel for the defence elicited the fact that Macpherson had entered Clerk's service some time after the ghostly visitation, and that certain financial transactions had taken place between them, as to the price of silence, which seem to have broken down.

The next witness, Angus Cameron, a man of Rannoch in Perthshire, had a more straightforward story to tell. In the year of the murder he had been living by the cateran trade. He belonged to a band which operated far and wide over the country. On the night of the 27th September, he and a companion had slept in Glenbruar braes, ten miles distant from the scene of the murder, had risen before daybreak, and made their way to the hill of Cristie, where they had arranged to meet their leader and others of the band from Lochaber. Whatever their business was (and though Cameron does not say, there is little difficulty in supposing that a cattle-lifting job was on hand), it required secrecy. They lay hidden for the day in a hollow on the hill, keeping a look-out for their expected companions. About mid-day, Duncan Clerk (whom Cameron was acquainted with) and another man passed so close to them that Cameron easily recognised them, but they continued to lie quiet in their hiding-place. Later in the day, about an hour and a half before sunset, they caught sight of a man in blue, with a gun in his hand, within gunshot distance of them. Cameron's account of the scene that was then enacted runs as follows:—"That he saw Clerk and his companion meet with the man in blue; and, after they had stood for some time together, he saw Clerk strike at the man in blue, as he thought, with his naked hand only, upon the breast; but, upon the stroke, he heard the man struck cry out, and clap his hand upon the place, turn about, and go off; that Clerk and the other man stood still for a little and then followed after, and he saw the said Duncan and the other man, each of whom had a gun, fire at the man in blue, and immediately he fell." This thrilling spectacle, thrown in such a surprising manner before their eyes, was too serious for the caterans; they immediately got up and bolted, leaving the two men handling the dead body.



GLEN CRISTIE

In spite of this evidence the Edinburgh jury were not satisfied of the prisoners' guilt. The counsel for the defence fastened of course on the ghost story and made great play with the English sergeant speaking "good Lochaber Gaelic," though, as Scott remarks, there was nothing more ridiculous in a ghost speaking a language which he did not understand when in the body than there was in his appearing at all. Anyhow, Clerk and Macdonald were assolizied *simpliciter* and dismissed from the bar.

Such were the circumstances under which Davies met his death, as far as they can be gathered from the published account. A careful reading of the evidence, however, leaves the impression that more might have been produced against the prisoners. Tradition enables us to complete the story.

They were, as their advocate was convinced, guilty. Clerk, who was a determined and fearless man, was the prime mover; Macdonald, it is said, never fired at all. The people who were shearing their corn in Gleney had seen them setting out with their guns, and the spot where the deed was done was at no great distance from where they were working; indeed the shots are said to have been heard by them. Macpherson, at any rate, who happened to be on the hill, heard the firing close beside him and thought the hunters had shot a deer. Running forward over a hillock which obstructed his view, he was horrified to find them engaged in robbing a dead body. Clerk immediately ordered him to take a share of the spoil and threatened to shoot him if he did not. Macpherson fled precipitately, and managed to escape owing to the fortunate interference of his dog, which seized and held Clerk.

Apart from the odium which his duties were certain to bring on him, tradition also says that the unhappy Sergeant had earned much ill-will from his needlessly provocative manner to the people. When coming from the Castle to Dubrach with his men's pay, he would sometimes shake the bag in the faces of the natives and boast that it held as much as would buy up all the cattle in Gleney.

Scott's explanation of the ghost story agrees with the account current in Braemar. According to the traditionary record, Macpherson had tried blackmailing Clerk, and,

whether it was on the failure of this or from a more worthy motive, he determined to reveal what he knew. He felt that the sentiment of the country, though it did not actively approve of the murder, was in favour of letting sleeping dogs lie. He therefore invented the story of Davies's apparition having visited him and ordered him to bury his bones, well knowing that according to current Highland belief a ghost's commands must be obeyed whatever they might be.

In presenting the case against the men, the Crown put forward no other motive than robbery. The most charitable explanation, and also the one that perhaps best fits all the facts, would give a less repulsive character to the crime. It is allowable to suppose that Clerk and MacDonald had meant to devote the day to deer-hunting as they said ; that Davies had met them in the afternoon and challenged Clerk for wearing tartan, as he had challenged John Grower in the morning, only that Clerk's case was much worse seeing that he carried firearms ; that in a moment of passion the Highlander struck at the hated Englishman, not with his hand as it seemed at first to Cameron, but with his dirk ; and that, having by this act of violence forfeited his life if Davies escaped, after the few minutes' hesitation which Cameron noticed, he made an end of the matter. This view finds some corroboration in the statement of Clerk's father-in-law that he had acted in self-defence, and also perhaps in a remark which Clerk himself made on one occasion when declining a discussion of the subject with Macpherson, "What can you say of an unfortunate man ?" And there we may fittingly leave the matter, merely adding that, whether Clerk's conscience troubled him or not, he soon after took a farm in Gleney, within the bounds of which lay the hill of Cristie, and there passed the remainder of his life.

THE HIGHLAND DRESS.—With the complete suppression of the caterans soon after 1750, the work of the Red-coats was done, and the Highlanders of Deeside settled down to accommodate themselves as best they could to the new aspect of things. Still, the recollections of the stirring times of the past were hard to kill. There is a rather interesting

statement in the minister's account of Crathie and Braemar about 1795, which shows that the fires of the old clan spirit had not even then fallen completely cold. He tells again the story of the Fiery Cross and Carn-na-cuimhne, the gathering-place and slogan of the Farquharsons, as he may have heard it from old men who fought at Culloden, and adds that "at this day, was a fray or squabble to happen at a market, or any public meeting, such influence has this word over the minds of the country people, that the very mention of Carn-na-cuimhne would in a moment collect all the people in this country who happened to be present, to the assistance of the person assailed."

The law against the Highland dress was less rigorously enforced some ten years after it was first put in execution. By that time, however, the Highlanders of Deeside had reconciled themselves to the garments of the Sassenach. The Government were in an equivocal position in the matter. Owing to the outbreak of the Seven Years' war and the urgent need for soldiers, they began to draw on the important military resources lying available in the Highlands. One kilted regiment after another was authorised and embodied. The same thing took place during the war of the American Revolution, twenty years later. The authorities were thus blessing and banning the same thing at the same time. It is not too much to say that but for the existence of these Highland regiments the national garb would finally have become as extinct as the toga. In 1782, when the fortunes of England had sunk to the lowest ebb, the Act against the dress was formally repealed, partly, no doubt, as an acknowledgment of the splendid services of the Highlanders in the war, but chiefly from selfish motives, with a view to promote further recruiting. Apparently the event was supposed to have some interest for the people of Braemar, as there is among the Invercauld papers a proclamation in Gaelic announcing that the Highlanders "are no longer bound by law to the womanly dress of the lowlanders. This is to publish to every man, young and old, high and low, that they may after this put on and wear trues, philabeg, short coats, and hose, and belted plaid, without fear of the laws of the Kingdom and notice of enemies."

OTHER CHANGES.—The new lowland dress and the disuse of arms, though the most obvious of the changes that followed the violent disruption of the clan system, were not the most important. The altered relations of the peasantry to their superiors involved deep-reaching consequences. Gradually the lairds and chiefs withdrew from familiar intercourse with the people, and the gentry of middle rank—the tacksmen and duine-uasals of the clan—in course of time disappeared. It was the presence of this upper class that gave to Highland society its peculiar character. The common man was strictly dependent on the lairds and tacksmen for his little holding, but at the same time they owed their power and military importance to his goodwill and readiness in their service. Thus, the obligation being reciprocal, the dignity of the lower orders was preserved. “They were prompt to serve, without servility.” General Stewart gives a vivid picture in his *Sketches* of the manners of the Highlanders under the old *régime*. “By habitual intercourse with their superiors they acquired a great degree of natural good breeding, together with a fluency of nervous, elegant, and grammatical expression. The Gaelic language is singularly adapted to colloquial ease, frankness, and courtesy. A Highlander was accustomed to stand before his superior with his bonnet in his hand, if so permitted (which was rarely the case, as few chose to be outdone in politeness by the people), and his plaid thrown over his left shoulder, with his right arm in full action, adding strength to his expressions, while he preserved a perfect command of his mind, his words, and manners.”

Another feature that struck strangers and travellers among them was their elasticity of body and freedom of carriage, due partly to the fact that they were rather herdsmen than ploughmen, and partly to their fondness for manly exercises and trials of strength and endurance, from which the modern “Highland Games” are directly descended. Capt. Burt, an Englishman who wrote about 1730, says: “They walk nimbly and upright, so that you will never see, among the meanest of them, in the most remote parts, the clumsy stooping gait of the French *paisans* or our own country fellows, but on the contrary a kind of stateliness in the midst of their poverty.”

By the end of the 18th century all this was greatly altered. Observers who lived at the time and saw the passing of the old order have recorded that even the appearance of the people seemed quite changed. Instead of those martial figures with an erect and independent air and ease of manners they saw "only plain, home-spun folk." It will be noticed in the account of Sandy Davidson that in many of the most striking peculiarities of his manners and character, besides his devotion to the chase, he belonged to an earlier generation rather than to his own.

VI

THE NAME GLEN TANAR

(See page 61)

THE forms which are on record at various dates are Tanner, Taner, Tawner, Tannyr, and Tanyr (MacDonald's *Place Names of West Aberdeenshire*). The last is the earliest, dating from 1450. The common modern spelling is Tanar. It will thus be seen that, unlike many place-names whose history can be traced in documents for so long a period, this one presents practically no variations. In every reference the consonants *t*, *n*, *r*—the skeleton of the word—are present. Whatever the name may mean, it is clear that for four and a half centuries at least it has been sounded in the same manner as it is to-day.

About a quarter of a century ago, however, the people of the district were surprised to learn that they and their ancestors had been labouring under a delusion, and that henceforth the correct name for the river, glen, and parish was Tana. So at least Sir William Brooks, the shooting tenant and afterwards owner of the glen, informed them; and in his zeal for the new child of his fancy he decreed that it alone should enjoy the rights of legitimacy, to the total exclusion of such pretenders as Tanar, Taner, or Tanner.

Protests were of course raised on behalf of the wonted usage, but in vain. The whimsical Baronet had mounted his hobby-horse and nothing could get him off again. He carried on a constant crusade against the letter which offended him. It became an act of faith to abjure it, denounce it, and persecute it wherever found. On one occasion his enthusiasm rose to the pitch of denying that Tanar "could be considered a word at all."

The responsibility for this curious obsession lay, in the first instance at least, at Michie's door. He and Brooks had, we believe, been discussing the meaning of the name on one occasion, when Michie casually dropped the unhappy suggestion that possibly the name St. Anna, who it seems had some local celebrity, might be connected with Tanar. Such an etymology is of course fanciful to a degree, and Michie himself did not believe it (the derivation that he favoured was *Tuath n'air*, the north-lying land), but he had unwittingly suggested doubts in Brooks's mind as to the correctness of the form Tanar which nothing could afterwards exorcise. We have heard that Michie often expressed astonishment at the conflagration which his spark had kindled.

The St. Anna etymology was soon dropped as being too hopelessly impossible, but another on the same lines was looked out. The Gaelic adjective *tana*, meaning "thin," "shallow," seemed to meet the requirements of the case, and was forthwith adopted. "So long," wrote Sir William triumphantly, "as appreciation of the poetically expressive Gaelic language shall endure, so long will stand the word TANA as descriptive of the stream called shallow in contrast to the adjacent deep and mighty Dee." If the sceptic still enquired what was to be done with the letter *r*, and pointed out that it is recorded from a time when Gaelic was still spoken in the district, he had to make the best of the brilliant suggestion that it is a "Cockneyism, like Annar, Maria*r*!"

The assumption which underlies this and the other etymologies of Tanar which we have seen, is that all Scottish place names, if they are not English, can be solved by the help of the Gaelic dictionary. Now there are at least two serious errors here. In the first place, topographical names sometimes preserve words which have become obsolete in modern Gaelic, and so are unintelligible to Gaelic speakers themselves. In the second place (and this is the important point for the present case), a considerable number of names of places in certain parts of Scotland are not Gaelic at all, but Pictish, which, though it was a Celtic tongue, most scholars are agreed was more nearly allied to Welsh and the Celtic

languages of the Continent than to Gaelic, and sometimes contains roots that are unrepresented in the latter. The neglect of both these possibilities has led to much worthless etymologising, the usual method being to twist, modify, or mutilate the name as commonly pronounced and written till it resembles some current Gaelic vocable; in short, to falsify the data. Most books on place-names will supply instances of such etymologies, which have about the same value as the well-known derivations of Forbes from "forebirse," Coutts from "cooch!" and similar curiosities.

To come then to the point, what is the derivation of Tanar? It is, we believe, simple enough, provided it is sought for in the proper quarter. (Etymologies like Tuath na air, "north-lying land," and Tan-air, "scanty land," may be at once dismissed, apart from phonetic or grammatical difficulties, by the well established rule that where glen and river have the same name it is the river name that is the older.) The root of Tanar is to be found in the Old Celtic *tanar-os*, which was used as a river name on the Continent also. A tributary of the Po in Cisalpine Gaul was so called in classical times, now the Tanaro in Piedmont.* The stem is *ten*, seen also in Latin *tonare*, German *Donner*, English *thunder*; and the meaning is the "noisy, loud-sounding stream"—a description that suits the Deeside river well, especially the part near its confluence with the Dee, where there is an *eas* or waterfall.

The name then is Celtic and Pictish, as MacDonald (*P.N. of West Abd.*) conjectured though he did not trace it. This identification of the names of a Scottish stream and a river in far-off Northern Italy may strike the general reader as improbable; and so it might indeed be considered if this were a solitary instance, or if the historical situation that gave rise to such cases is forgotten. It must be remembered that before the Romans carried their language into the north of Italy and Gaul, Celtic, in various dialects, was spoken all over Western Europe, the British Isles included. It naturally follows that the same roots appear on both sides of the Channel in the designations of rivers, mountains and other natural features. So far from

* Holder, *Alt-celtischer Sprachschatz*.

the parallel of the Scottish Tanar and the Italian Tanaros being exceptional, it would be nearer the truth to say that the majority of the old Celtic place-names of Gaul and the parts of the Continent where Celtic was formerly spoken are represented in Scotland. It is only in recent years that this line of investigation has begun to be followed up, but already it may be said with confidence that no examination of Scottish place-names can be considered satisfactory which neglects to compare the corresponding Continental forms. In order to illustrate this parallelism, and by way of showing the high degree of probability—we may say the certainty—attaching to the derivation which we have suggested for Tanar, a few similar examples may be given, and those selected from the immediate neighbourhood of our river.

Allachy is a tributary of the Tanar. The name presents no difficulty, the primary part being *ail*, a rock or boulder. The same root is seen in *Alis-ontia* in Belgic Gaul, now the Elz, and in the famous *Alesia*, the scene of Caesar's siege, a rock fortress.

Gairn. The root here is *gar*, rough, seen with extension in *garbh*. Cp. the Gaulish *Gar-unna*, now the Garonne. The *n* is a river-ending common in Pictland and is etymologically the same as the Gaulish *-ona*, seen in *Calarona*, now the Chalaronne; *Matrona*, now Marne, &c.

Tarland. The spellings of this word at various dates, as given in MacDonald, are *Taruelun*, *Taruelone*, *Tharualund*, *Tharflund*. The *d* is unhistorical (cp. *Macfarland* for *Macfarlane*, *Lamont* for *Laomuinn*), and is absent in the native speech. The *u* and *f* after *r* point unmistakeably to the source of the first syllable. It is no doubt *tarbh*, a bull. The most probable explanation of the second is that it is the same as the old Celtic *lan-on*, seen in *Ercolana*, *Vindolana*, and *Mediolanon** ("middle plain,") now Milan. The primitive form of *Tarland* would be something like *Tarvolanon*, "bull plain."

Balmoral. The first part is, of course, *baile*, a town. The second occurs in other parts of Scotland as well, and the difficulty has been to get a derivation whose meaning

* This word is Celtic all through, and not a Latin hybrid.

will be applicable in all the cases. Gael. *mòral*, majestic, looks tempting, and may be the word in some of the *morals*. A more satisfactory explanation, however, is found in the Old Celtic *ialos* or *ialon*, seen in a multitude of place names on the Continent, and meaning "an open fair space or clearing." *Moral* would be thus for an older *mor-ial(on)*, "great clearing."

Mar. According to Stokes and other scholars this is originally a tribe-name, cognate etymologically with the *Marsi* in Italy.

The same identity runs through the Celtic personal names. Thus Morgan, on Scottish ground peculiarly associated with Aberdeenshire, is the Gaulish *Moricantos*, "sea bright"; Donald is for *Dumno-valos*, "world-ruler," the first part of which is also found in *Dumno-rix*, the friend of our schooldays. But this line of enquiry cannot be more than indicated here.

To return to Tanar. The Old Celtic *tanaros*, "loud-sounding," from which we have derived it, occurs with the same meaning in another connection, this time as a personal designation. The Celts used it as a "by-name" for the god who corresponded with them to the Roman Jupiter, in the same way as the Romans themselves used "Tonans." It seems to occur in an inscription found on the Continent, and what is especially interesting for us, it is also extant in one found at Chester belonging to the year 154 A.D., which runs *Iovi optimo maximo Tanaro*, "To Jupiter, best and greatest, the thunderer." (The reader need hardly be reminded that it was the practice of the legionaries to honour the gods of the country where they happened to be stationed, and that therefore Tanaros is with certainty a Celtic divinity.)

This double use of *tanaros* as a river- and god-name may be due to nothing more than the fact that its meaning suited both cases, but it is at least worthy of remark that many of our river names are really names of Celtic divinities as well, the river being regarded as a manifestation of the divinity. Thus Dee and Don are both names of goddesses. So is Nesa, now the Ness. Clouta, now the Clyde, was the name both of the goddess and the river. The old name of the

Ribble was Belisama, "most bright one," from Belos, the Gaulish sun-god. One is tempted to put Tanar in the same category. But whether the Celts who named it considered it associated with one of their deities or not, the derivation is not affected.

From the above history of the word one fact emerges very strikingly—the great antiquity of this river name. At the beginning of this article we remarked that it is on record for four hundred and fifty years, but our investigation has carried it back to far remoter times. Nearly 2000 years ago the Celtic-speaking Britons were using the word, as the inscription just quoted proves, and presumably our river had its name by that time. How much older it may be, who can tell? Equally noteworthy is the absence of phonetic change during this long period of time. We can say that the Deeside tribesmen who marched south to meet Agricola and the Roman legions in battle called the Tanar by much the same sound as is heard to-day. A fact like this brings to mind Canon Taylor's generalisation, and supplies another instance of its truth. "One class of local names," he says, "is of special value in investigations relating to primeval history. The river names are everywhere the memorials of the earliest races. They seem to possess an almost indestructible vitality . . . Even the names of the eternal hills are less permanent than those of rivers."

It is satisfactory to note that, though Sir W. Brooks was extremely anxious that the Ordnance Survey should lend their authority to his innovation, the proper form has been retained in the revised, as in the original, map.

VII

DEPOPULATION IN MAR

(See page 64)

AN estimate of the number of inhabitants about the beginning of the 18th century can be made from the Poll Book. In Braemar and Crathie, there were then returned as taxable 1200 individuals over the age of 16. This excludes poor persons living on charity. From evidence of a slightly later date, 200 may be added for these, and perhaps 100 for "children" whose age was really over 16. This would give 1500 as the number aged 16 and over. Using the proportions which are supplied by census returns, we may calculate that there was a total population of at least 2300. If these figures are approximately right, the population continued to grow during the next half-century. At various dates it stood as follows:—

1700 (calculated from P.B.)	-	-	2300?
1755 (Webster's estimate)	-	-	2671
1791 (Old Stat. account)	-	-	2251
1801 (Census)	-	-	1876
1851 (do.)	-	-	1788
1901 (do.)	-	-	1452

Thus the inhabitants of the two parishes have diminished by nearly a half within 150 years, and the decrease has been continuous.

Such evidence as we have seems to point to the conclusion that it was sometime in the first half of the 18th century that the maximum was reached. The Civil wars of the 17th century, which led to destruction of life, both directly in the

field and indirectly by the destruction of the means of living, doubtless helped to keep down the natural increase of population. At a still earlier date there survives one bit of information which throws some light on the state of matters in the district. The accounts of the lands of the Earldom of Mar, which were kept by the Chamberlain on behalf of the King, give the names of all the tenancies and the rents payable during a large part of the 15th and 16th centuries. Again and again the Chamberlain has to report that there is no rental forthcoming from certain possessions, because they are lying uncultivated. Interesting as it would have been to hear the cause of this, he gives no explanation. Possibly the derelict lands were due to bad harvests, or perhaps to the insecurity and destruction of clan warfare, but the most likely explanation—however surprising it may seem to-day—is that the country was suffering from lack of people owing to the ravages of disease. It has to be remembered that during the middle ages, and later, the rural parts enjoyed no immunity from the epidemics of fever and pestilence that periodically decimated the towns. Traditions of the *galar mor* (the plague) survived in Braemar till quite recent times. In fact, the mortality in the Highlands, as in Scotland and Europe generally, seems to have been so high that the population increased very slowly till about the beginning of the 18th century. Occasionally, in unhealthy seasons, there was actual retrogression. At anyrate, it is plain from the Chamberlain's rent rolls that the lands of Braemar and Strathdee needed all the people they had and more, to cultivate them.

The figures for the other three upper parishes, Glenmuick, Tullich and Glengairn, calculated in the same way, are as follows :—

1700	-	-	-	1800?
1755	-	-	-	2270
1795	-	-	-	2117
1801	-	-	-	1901
1851	-	-	-	1984
1901	-	-	-	2347

Here an actual growth of population has taken place. It will be observed, however, that after 1755 a decline similar to that in Braemar and Crathie set in, which has continued since,

though in the returns it is masked by the growth of the village of Ballater. In the purely rural parts of the parishes, there has been an uninterrupted shrinkage.

About the middle of the 18th century, the population of the five upper parishes was about 5000 souls, a number that was certainly far in excess of the resources of the district. The agricultural improvements that have doubled the returns from the soil were yet to come, the cattle and sheep were much inferior in size to the stock of to-day, and except for domestic requirements, productive industry was unknown. The large farmers or tacksmen, who were often the relatives of the lairds, generally had an easy bargain of their holdings, and a comfortable enough subsistence, but the smaller tenants and landless cottars had a hard struggle. In good seasons they just managed to make a living, and in bad many of them were on the point of starvation. That the congestion reached its height soon after Culloden is confirmed by a statement in one of the pleadings in a lawsuit between Invercauld and the Earl of Fife in 1760, that never within the memory of man had there been so much land newly taken into cultivation. About the same time too, the author of a Description of the Parish of Birse complains that the forest, which properly belonged to the Birse people as a grazing, had been encroached upon by "Highlanders from the head of Dee," who were living there as squatters. Evidently the reservoir of humanity in the upper glens was spilling over.

Soon after this time the population began to decline. The processes by which the reduction was effected were gradual but continuous. The chief of these were the enlargement of holdings as opportunity offered, and the elimination of crofters and cottars. The introduction of the new breed of sheep and the displacement of the old Highland black cattle operated in the same direction, as the sheep required fewer people to look after them. The first enemy of the crofter was not the deer, but the sheep. A verse of a Gaelic poem, composed by a Badenoch crofter who was lying under threat of eviction* about the time of the Napoleonic wars, recalls this phase of Highland history. "Rams will not turn the battle," he says, "nor will herdsmen with cloak be of use ;

* Sinton, *Poetry of Badenoch*.

sheep of the glens will not keep off the French ; and alas ! at this time I'm in woe."

Before long the deer forest completed what the sheep farm had begun, and gradually the higher glens were given over to sport entirely. The case of Gleney, whence nine families were removed about 1830 at the request of the shooting tenant, a Jew, is typical of what gradually took place all over Upper Deeside. Less than a hundred years ago, Dalvorar in Glen Dee, for example, carried a great stock of cattle and sheep, and in the remotest parts of the Mar forest, the people had their summer pasturages and shielings, full of healthy human activity.

"And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less."

VIII

GEORGE BROWN

(See page 118)

THOUGH Michie was not born till two years after Brown's death, he had good opportunities of picking up the Sennachie's stories. There were three sources in particular, besides the common "forenicht" talk of the district, from which he drew much of his knowledge of Deeside traditions, as handed down by George Brown. These were James Brown, of the Lebhal; his own grandmother, who was a half-sister of the Sennachie's; and his grandfather, who lived at Torgalter, and knew him intimately.

The high estimate of George Brown's talents, which is given in the work, might perhaps raise a suspicion that the author saw his relative with a somewhat partial eye, but it is confirmed by the reviewer of the *Deeside Tales* in the "Daily Free Press" when the book appeared in 1872. He writes anonymously, but evidently with personal knowledge, and his remarks are worth quoting: "Those who are familiar with the mouth to mouth histories of such men as George Brown and Sandy Davidson will be ready to swell some or other of the biographies with incidents not narrated in the book. Many such occur to us. But at the same time it must be admitted that the incidents that have been given, and they are not few, are not only authentic, but sufficient for the modelling of the characters whose lives they illustrate. The writer, into whose library has fallen a goodly portion of Mr. Brown's books, is in the position to corroborate to the full the author's estimate of the character and acquirements of this remarkable man."

One correction, however, may be ventured. In calling him "the last of the Sennachies," Michie is not strictly accurate. The designation has its artistic merits no doubt, and is true enough for that part of the Dee valley to which Brown belonged, but the race survived to a much later period further west in Braemar proper, and many now living could mention individuals whose stories they have listened to, and who, though their abilities might be inferior to Brown's, were genuine representatives of this ancient Celtic type. It was to them, and especially to one of them, that Grant owed many of his *Legends of the Braes o' Mar*, published in 1861. Grant himself was born at Abergairn, not far from Ballater, but he spent some years as schoolmaster in Braemar, and there collected the materials of his book. The "old worthy" whom he mentions as the source of the excellent chapter entitled, "Long, long ago," was John Brown (again a Brown!), who died less than thirty years ago. The conclusion of that chapter is enough to show that not only the matter but the traditional manner of the Sennachie still survived in him.

IX

THE FARQUHARSONS : CLANN FHEARCHAIR OR FHIONNLAI DH

(*See page 132*)

“Clann-Fhiunnlaidh Bhraidh-Mharr,
Buidheann ceannsgalach, ard,
'Nuair a ghlaoidhte Adbhans 's iad dh'eireadh.”

Clan Finlay of Braemar, a band noble and commanding ; when the Advance is sounded, 'tis they would rise.

—*Col. John Roy Stewart.*

DURING the period with which “Deeside Tales” deals and for long before, the two ruling families in Upper Deeside were the Farquharsons and the Gordons. In popular language it is usual to speak of the former as a clan, but not of the latter ; and historically there is ground for the distinction. The Farquharsons all along were more strictly Highland. They make their first appearance at the head of Dee, a district where the Celtic language and way of life prevailed, while the Gordons, though they owned lands as far up the valley as Abergeldie from the middle of the fifteenth century, were of an alien race. Their main possessions lay in the Lowlands, and at the height of their power they might be described rather as a confederation which had a considerable Highland following, than as a clan proper.

Purists might perhaps detect certain imperfections in the Farquharsons too, considered as a thorough-bred Highland clan. For one thing, the antiquity of most of the great clars of the north and west, such as the MacDonalds, Mackays,

Campbells, &c., is considerably greater. The Farquharsons do not figure prominently till towards the end of the sixteenth century. Another point that claims notice is that in their own territory their name neither has, nor had, the preponderance that might be expected. In the Poll Book we have the names of practically all the inhabitants about 1696, and they are surprisingly varied. Besides those specially characteristic of the district, such as Coutts, Michie, or MacHardy, surnames of clans whose headquarters were elsewhere are found in abundance. MacLeans, MacRaes, MacDonalds, MacDougalls and many others had somehow made their way to the Braes of Mar, and remind us that the smaller tenants must have moved about within the Highlands and changed their landlords much more frequently than is sometimes supposed.

Thus the term "the Farquharsons" is a decidedly conventional expression. In saying that "three hundred of them joined Prince Charles and fought at Culloden," nothing is implied as to their birth and blood relationship, though doubtless many did bear the name and many who did not would be proud to reckon themselves of the race of Finlay. What is meant is that they were tenants of Farquharson landlords or in some way allied with or dependent on them. The same state of matters would be found in greater or less degree in all the clans, each of which may be regarded in some respects as a regiment which recruited itself from any suitable quarter, according as the chief had land at his disposal.

In spite, however, of the presence of a large non-Farquharson element in the district—the explanation of which will presently be suggested—there is no sufficient reason to refuse, as some have done, to the Farquharsons the right of ranking as a clan. The truth is that clans were never legal institutions or susceptible of strict legal definition. For practical purposes the Farquharsons and their following were recognised as a clanned community. So much so, that the Privy Council, for instance, in 1672 held Invercauld responsible for the peaceable behaviour not only of his own tenants but of all "those persons of his name, descended of his family, wheresoever they dwell."

As regards size and importance, the clan was not one of the largest, but it was high up in the secondary rank. Lord President Forbes of Culloden credits it sometime before the '45 with being able to put 500 fighting men into the field. The figures for some of the others are: Campbells 3000, Macgregors 700, Grants 850, Mackintoshes 800, Macphersons 400, MacDonell of Glengarry 500, Seaforth's 1000. There is a story told of the Farquharson of Monaltrie,* who died in 1828, that "having been bred to the law in Edinburgh he was while there one of a party invited to meet the poet Burns. In the course of the evening, the poet happening to make some enquiries as to the position of his clansmen in the north, Mr. Farquharson was proceeding with characteristic modesty to represent them as a minor clan, when Burns interrupted him with 'Hold, sir; you have no reason to be ashamed of your clan; see that they have no reason to be ashamed of you.'"

THE EARLDOM OF MAR AND THE FARQUHARSONS.—Before, however, the Farquharsons appeared on the scene at all and for two hundred years after, the chief potentates on the Upper Dee were the Earls of Mar. The relation between the two requires some explanation.

The history of this great Earldom, which embraced lands on Donside as well (Kildrummy Castle being the chief fortress), leads back to the days of the Celtic kings. A Mormaer of Mar was present at the battle of Clontarf in Ireland in 1014 with a Scottish contingent, and the names of several of these Mormaers, who by and bye became known as Earls, have come down to us. Such names as Ruadri, Malcolm, Ego, Gillechrist, Morgund, which are extant in writs, show that the Earldom was slow to become Normanised. With its history during these early centuries, however, we are not concerned. About the end of the 14th century its vicissitudes began. The direct original line ended in a Countess. The notorious Alexander Stewart, illegitimate son of "The Wolf of Badenoch" and grandson of Robert II., seized her *vi et armis*, and forced her to marry him and grant him a charter of her possessions. On his

**Rec. of Invercauld.*

death in 1435 the Earldom fell into the hands of the Crown to the exclusion of the heirs of the original line. Sometimes the kings granted it to their sons or favourites, sometimes the Earls of Huntly had a spell of possession, but these grants were all temporary, and from 1502 to 1565 the title was in abeyance and the lands were administered as royal property.

These changes must have had important consequences for the population of Mar, and it is to the situation created by them that the rise of the Farquharsons is probably due. Had the Highlands of Deeside remained continuously under native Earls, ruling from their castles of Kildrummy and Kindrochit, it is difficult to see how any of their vassals could have grown so great as to rank as an independent clan on the territory of their own Superior. The absence, however, of a local chief would leave the field clear for some of the principal tenants to play the part. There are grounds for believing, as we will show, that something like this was what really happened.

ORIGIN OF THE CLAN.—Turning first to the accounts of their origin given by the Farquharsons themselves, we find that the clan, like all others, is well supplied with histories and genealogies of its early heroes. As usual with such accounts when they are submitted to critical examination, they turn out to be a compound of demonstrable error, possible or probable truth, and a residuum of proved fact, the whole being coloured with the obvious desire to make out an ancestry as ancient and honourable as possible. They have been ably dealt with in a series of papers in the *Aberdeen Free Press*,* and shown to be mostly of late date and deficient in authority and credibility. In one particular, however, the accounts are in agreement, that the original progenitor of the family was one Farquhar, who belonged to the Shaw branch of the Mackintoshes, and came over from Rothiemurchus and settled in Braemar. From him the clan takes its designation Clann Fhearchair. This much may be accepted, but to the questions when this Farquhar lived or

* These excellent articles appeared in Jan. and Feb., 1904, signed "F. S. A. Scot." To them the present writer is indebted for the references to the *Exchequer Rolls* and *Chiefs of Grant*.

what was his position in his new country the answers are so wildly at variance that it is plain nothing authentic can be learned. According to one account he lived in the reigns of Robert II. and Robert III. (1371-1406), and "had considerable possessions in Braemar"; according to another he "came over to Mar and possessed himself of the Braes thereof" about the time of the above-mentioned Alexander Stewart (1435), and was made Baillie and Chamberlain of the Earldom after it was annexed by the Crown. Popular tradition has quite a different story to tell. Farquhar Cam (gleyed Farquhar) was a poor basket maker who made his living by selling the produce of his labour in the braes of Angus and bringing home meal in exchange. An unsympathetic Macgregor narrative* relates that he and his sons were little better than caterans, but admits that somehow or other they prospered and managed to get hold of Inverey, which was the foundation of their fortunes.

The original Farquhar, therefore, is a dim, uncertain figure. National and public records contain no mention of his name. This much, however, may safely be hazarded, that he was a man who in some way made his mark among his fellows; otherwise we should be at a loss to explain why his descendants should have chosen to be known by his Christian name, and to regard him as the founder of a new sept. While recognising the difficulties and inconsistencies of the various traditions, we believe that it is reasonably probable that a Farquhar Shaw or Mackintosh did obtain some footing in Braemar under one or other of the Earls or the Crown, and left his affairs in such train that his successors were able to climb the ladder a few steps higher.

FINLAY MOR.—The most famous of these, as all accounts unite in holding, was Fionnladh Mór. Finlay's relationship to Farquhar is variously stated. Some call him the grandson, some the great-grandson, and others a still remoter descendant. However this may be, the family had been rising in the meantime. His father is said to have acquired Invercauld by marrying the daughter and only child of the laird, who was at that time a Stewart. Particulars as to

* Miss A. Murray Macgregor's *History*, vol. 2, p. 4.

Finlay's own additions to his patrimony are wanting, but he is universally represented as having so strengthened and consolidated the clan that he may be regarded as its "virtual founder." Certain it is that after his day it rather called itself Clann Fhionnlaidh than Clann Fhearchair. The genealogists say of him :—

"Findla, commonly called Findla More on account of his gigantic size and great strength of body, who was also a man of fine parts, remarkable bravery and fortitude, was killed at the battle of Pinkie, anno 1547. He accompanied the Earl of Huntly, who procured him the carrying of the banner royal. His body lies interred in the churchyard of Inveresk. The place is known to this day by the name of 'The Lang Highlandman's grave.' His first son, William, succeeded, and of the other five since that time are descended the families of Monaltrie, Inverey, Craignite, Broughderg, Auchriachan, Finzean, Whitehouse, Allanquoich, Shanallie, Camdell."

Till recently all that was known of Finlay depended on tradition. No contemporary evidence of any kind could be pointed to, even for his existence. This want, however, has now been supplied, and not only have we learnt much about him, but a considerable amount of information regarding Upper Deeside in his day is now available. The archives of Castle Grant give us our first reference. It appears that about 1527 a clan feud of more than ordinary violence had been raging between the men of Deeside and the Grants of Strathspey.* There had been plundering and bloodshed on both sides ("truncacionem et depopulacionem hominum, ac asportacionem animalium, granorum rerumque aliarum"). The parties negotiated with each other like belligerent powers, and at Dalvorar in Strathayon a treaty of peace was ultimately signed. The first among the Deeside signatories is Finlay Farquharson. There can be no doubt that this is Finlay Mor. He is described in the deed along with the others, as tenant of the King's lands in Strathdee. What lands he held is not stated. This deficiency, however, can fortunately be supplied from one of the recently published State papers. During the period 1435 to 1565, as already mentioned, the Earldom of Mar was generally

* *Chiefs of Grant*, vol. 3.

in the hands of the Crown, that is to say, it was part of the Royal estate, and the rents of the lands were paid into the Exchequer. Turning to the accounts for the year 1539 (*Exchequer Rolls*), we find not only a complete list of the King's lands and rentals in Braemar, Strathdee, and Cromar, but also the names of all the tenants. Here again Finlay figures.* He is returned as tenant of Invercauld, Keloch, Cluny, and the half of Inverey. There are a few other big holders. Thomas and Duncan Donaldson are tenants of Dalmore, Corriemulzie, Craggan, Wester Allanaquoich and part of Castleton. Unfortunately their surname is only a patronymic, and it is impossible to identify them, but they must have been substantial men. Stewarts were in Auchallater and Auchindryne, and other holdings. Further down the valley, the tenancies are more split up. Crathienaird has six tenants, Easter and Wester Micras nineteen. The list of course does not include the multitude of sub-tenants, with whom the Crown had nothing to do ; they paid their rents to the crown holders.

The traditions, therefore, which represent the Farquharsons as being "in possession of the Braes of Mar" at this time exaggerate their position, and in two respects. In the first place, Finlay was no more than a crown tenant ; and in the second, though he was evidently the principal one, there were many others, great and small, each with his own following of dependants. This being the state of matters, the reason why there should be such diversity of names in what was now or soon after "the Farquharson country" becomes clear. We may remark in passing that many of these smaller tenancies continued to exist as separate possessions for nearly two hundred years. In 1635 there were in Crathie alone eighteen different proprietors.

Finlay Mor, then, was a crown rentaller, a position which, as some have pointed out, did not make him in the eye of the law a "landed man." He was *in* Invercauld, not *of* Invercauld. It is easy, however, to make too much of this. In the Lowlands the distinction would have been vital, but in the Highlands of the day it did not count for so much. The practical point to notice is that, though he may have held his

* See pp. 273 and 278.

lands by an inferior tenure, Finlay commanded the obedience of the people who lived on them; they followed him in war and peace. As society existed in the Highlands then and for two hundred years after, a chief of some sort was indispensable, and Mar having lost its own Earls, Finlay (or some of his ancestors) was able to fill the vacancy.

GROWTH OF THE CLAN.—He must have transmitted a considerable share of his ability to his posterity, for not long after his death the greater part of Braemar and Strathdee, with the exception of Glenmuick and Abergeldie, is found in their possession. The clan was to all intents and purposes formed, and when in 1565 the Earldom was restored to the Erskines, the heirs of the original line, the Farquharsons continued to hold their lands as vassals by *duchas*, a form of hereditary tenancy very characteristic of the Highlands and much beloved there. The first of the new Earls was guardian of James VI. in his minority, and regent of Scotland; his son was Treasurer; and they had large estates in the south. Thus their main interests lay outside the narrow circle of the Aberdeenshire mountains, and we may suppose that they were quite content to draw their rents there, and leave the management to the men on the spot. In 1584, Donald Farquharson of Monaltrie was appointed by James VI. keeper of the Royal forests in these parts, and a few years later he is called chief of his clan, and ordered by the Privy Council to answer for their good behaviour. By about this time too, branches of the family had spread into the neighbouring parts of Banffshire, Perthshire and Forfarshire, and obtained a footing there, but with these cadet houses we are not here concerned.

As the descendants of Finlay extended their power and possession, clan sentiment grew up *pari passu* around the name of Farquharson. This is well illustrated in one of the "genealogies," which tells that the original Farquhar "had three sons, Donald, John, and Finlay; Patrick and James are said also to be his sons or at least his brethren. Of Patrick is descended the Patersons in the north; and of James, who was called Don or Doun from his brown hair, are descended the Dons, Downies, and the Cowins.

Farquhar had also two base born sons, William and John, of whom is come Riachs, Cowies, and Grassicks calling themselves Coutts, and the M'Yocks."

The meaning of this is of course obvious: the bearers of these names, most of them very common in the district and no doubt existent long before Farquhar left his native Rothiemurchus, by a kind of semi-conscious make-believe manufactured a blood relationship with their chief. This was one of the strongest passions of claniship. "The cement of kinship, real or *reputed*, was what bound Celtic society together." Another genealogy refers to the "M'Cardies, Tawses, and several others, such as the Brebners and M'Andrews who have ever been faithful followers of the name of Farquharson; and by the general custom of the Highlands may be reckoned their kinsmen."

In tracing the rise of the clan, the favour which it enjoyed from its powerful neighbours to the east, the Earls of Huntly, has to be noticed as a contributory cause. As we have already mentioned, the Earldom of Mar was granted by the Crown more than once in the 16th century to these Earls, and it would appear that during these periods of possession they ruled and administered the lands through the Farquharsons as their representatives. Finlay Mor was Baillie to the Earl of Huntly of his day and accompanied him to Pinkie, and his son Donald of Tillygarmonth succeeded to the same office, and obtained the lands of Ballatrach, opposite Culbleen, on the Gordon estates, which long remained a Farquharson lairdship. There is also a bond of alliance between him and Huntly in 1559.* These facts point to a friendly connection between the young clan and this semi-regal House, which must have materially helped it to get well planted on its feet.

GRANTING OF CHARTERS.—Thus by the reign of James VI. we are to regard the various branches of the Farquharsons as the virtual rulers in the upper Dee, so long, at least, as their Superiors, the Earls of Mar, chose to continue them in their tenancies; and we may be sure that with their strong following behind them they would have been hard to remove. According to the *Records of Invercauld* their leases were

* Mackintosh, *The Mackintoshes*, p. 430

annually or periodically renewed by oral declaration in the presence of an assembly of the clan convened for the purpose at the Superior's court or at the parish kirk.

About the year 1632 the Earls inaugurated a new policy on their Deeside lands. They began to grant charters to their vassals, thus putting them on a firmer and more independent position. The motives for this step have given rise to various conjectures. It has been represented as an act of justice, or of favour in return for faithful service, or even as extorted by the growing power of the vassals. The truth is that it was a question of money, as might have been suspected, and as is evident from certain documents among the Earl of Mar and Kellie's papers now published by the Hist. MSS. Commission. In 1627 the Earl writes a letter to his son in England, which is to be shown to King Charles, in which he says, "Itt is treu ye knaw my straetts ar grett and very grett and I doo nott doubt bott His Majestie will have respectt to his auld servantt," meaning by this that the King will grant him permission to feu certain of his lands. In 1633 there is a warrant given at Whitehall for this purpose. Part of it runs: "The Earl of Mar and his son for relief of their debts are feuing some of their lands held ward of the Crown. The King requires the Lords of Exchequer to allow them to proceed with the Brae of Mar, Strathdee, Kildrummie, and Migvie in Cromar."

Thus, owing to the financial embarrassments of their superior, these Highland vassals had an opportunity of bettering their tenure. It is said that "the granting of the charters caused no little stir among the lairds. Those who had received them questioned the privileges claimed by those who had not, while they in their turn disputed the validity of the sheep-skin writs as they contemptuously termed the charters." The true inwardness of the situation no doubt was that those who despised the sheep-skin title deeds had been unable to purchase them; there could be no question of their validity.

The Farquharsons at any rate did not miss the chance of securing the advantages offered, and from this date till the attainder of the Earldom in 1715 they held most of their Deeside lands in feu. Thereafter they advanced a step further and held of the Crown.

BRANCHES OF THE CLAN.—Although the house of Invercauld ultimately acquired such preponderance in wealth and influence that it has become in popular parlance almost synonymous with the whole clan Farquharson, this was far from being the case in the earlier centuries. In fact, the clan was remarkable for the number of its separate branches. At first the position of Invercauld was no more than that of *primus inter pares*, if indeed it was so high. The original estate of Invercauld was a comparatively small holding in the vicinity of the present mansion house, but the good management of successive lairds gradually surrounded this nucleus with important possessions, both to the east and west on Deeside and in Perthshire on the south.

Finlay Mor (c. 1484-1547) of Invercauld is said to have left seven sons by his two wives. One of the sons belonging to the first family obtained Craigniety in Glenisla, and severed his connection with Deeside. The eldest of the second family was Donald, who was laird of Castleton, Monaltrie, Tillygarmonth in Birse, and Cennakyle and Ballatrach in Inchmarnoch. He was apparently accounted the chief of the clan, and died about 1619. He had a large family, who, besides carrying on the direct line of Castleton-Monaltrie, became the founders or progenitors of the founders of many cadet branches, of which the most important were those of Whitehouse in Cromar, Finzean, Allanaquoich and Inverey. The Whitehouse family became extinct in the male line in 1896 only; Finzean is still happily flourishing; Allanaquoich disappeared in the 18th century. As stated in chap. xiii., the Invereys were known as the MacHamish Farquharsons, their founder being James, son of Donald of Castleton. To this family belonged the Farquharsons of Auchindryne, Balmoral, and Tullochcoy. The last laird sold Inverey, Auchindryne and Balmoral to the Earl of Fife towards the end of the 18th century; Tullochcoy was parted with in 1772. The number of branches could be considerably increased by including the minor lairdships. Thus the idea of Clan Finlay as an organisation ruled by a single leader is quite erroneous; it was a confederacy of separate and independent interests which might or might not act together. As a matter of fact, they usually did.

The Invercauld Farquharsons were descended from Robert, second son of Finlay Mor, and younger brother of Donald of Castleton. If Finlay is to be called chief of the clan, and if the succession was determined by primogeniture, it is clear that the headship never rightly belonged to the Invercauld branch at all. The strict rule, however, gave place to practical considerations. By the time of Robert's son John (died about 1635), the family had acquired such weight that its headship was tacitly acknowledged by the other branches.

The prosperity of this house, though it may have owed something to fortune, is sufficiently explained by the character of the lairds, especially Robert, second of the name, who died about 1655. While their neighbours were content to remain fighting Highland chieftains, they learnt to appreciate the value of money and to identify themselves with the more settled life of the Lowlands, where alone it could be made. This Robert marked out a line of policy which had a decisive effect on the subsequent fortunes of his family.

He was educated at the Grammar School of Aberdeen, where we find him in 1612 as one of the ringleaders in a revolt and "barring-out" organised by the boys against their masters. He acquired the estate of Cloak in Lumphanan and appears as a lender of monies to various lairds. He invested in the salmon fishings belonging to the Aberdeen Town Council, and was a member of the Committee on Loan monies and taxations for the shire. As a result of his financial transactions he became interested in the estate of Wardes in the Garioch, the laird of which, Sir John Leslie, had got entangled in a maze of bonds and borrowing which led finally to his having to part with the property, much against his will. Curiously enough, we may remark in passing, some years before Invercauld entered into possession a band of his relatives had descended upon the unfortunate Leslie and seized his house *vi et armis*. It would appear that they were acting on behalf of the Earl of Mar, who probably had some bond on the estate. Leslie is found complaining to the Privy Council that the Farquharsons of Inverey, Finzean, Monaltrie, and others, to the number of 30 persons, "came to the place of Wardes, brake all the lockes aff the

yrone yetis in peeces, forcible entered within the toure, and as yet maisterfullie keepes the same, and hes putt ane nombre of lawles Hieland men thairin who shoots voleyces of gunnis out at the windowis of the hous, so as nane dares pas by the same for feare of thair lyves." After acquiring this estate, Robert of Invercauld is very commonly described as Farquharson of Wardes, and he is said to have been the first of his family or clan to use armorial bearings.

As a man of property he was all on the side of law and order and a keen enemy of "broken men." Spalding tells that the Committee of Estates agreed with him "for a certain sum of money" to defend Angus, Mearns, Aberdeen and Banff from the depredations of the Macgregor caterans, and that he effectually bridled them as long as the bargain lasted. Two other appearances which he makes in contemporary records point to the high local consideration in which he was held. During the height of the Montrose campaigns, the Earl of Mar was anxious that his important fortress of Kildrummy should not fall into unfriendly hands. There is a commission* of Sept., 1645, which begins:—"Obligacione and tie upon their trest freind, Robert Ferquharsoune of Invergald to the Earle of Mar and Lord Areskine touching the keeping and defending of thair house of Kildrummie." And again, in the year after the battle of Dunbar, when the Royalists in the south were preparing to make one more effort for the King, Lord Erskine writes from Alloa to Invercauld requesting him to undertake the levying of the Earl's northern vassals. The tone of the letter must have been flattering to his self-esteem. Some of the expressions Erskine uses are: "I am resolved to cast myself upon the counsel you gave me . . . the only invitation I had to follow this course proceeded from yourself . . . I have told the King you are about to do this . . . so committing the trust and care of all to your diligence, I, with your help, will putt home." In a later hand there is a copy among the Invercauld papers with the laudatory phrases carefully underlined.

The most original step in the life of this highly successful laird—his course of action in the civil war—remains to be

* Hist. MSS.—Earl of Mar and Kellie's papers.

mentioned. Almost all the branches of the Farquharson name, like the Highlanders generally, took the Royalist and anti-Covenanter side, owing in some measure no doubt to their traditional connection with the Gordons, the Royalist leaders in the north. Whatever may have been the cause, Robert of Invercauld was more in sympathy with what may be called Lowland political views, and instead of embarrassing his affairs in fruitless campaigns with Huntly and Montrose (like Donald of Monaltrie, for example), he preferred to watch the struggle from his own fireside. The execution of King Charles brought him into line with the other Royalists of his clan, as the above mentioned letter of Erskine implies, and he was prepared to take the field, but the battle of Worcester put an end to all such attempts.

Prudence and good management continued to distinguish the Invercaulds. At the Revolution the laird was a minor, and did not join Dundee. About this time Wardes was sold, but other estates in Cromar and elsewhere were bought. Within the lifetime of laird John (1672-1750) fell the two great Jacobite risings of the '15 and the '45. The first of these was, as is well known, planned and initiated on Deeside; in fact, Invercauld's house was for a time the headquarters of the great gathering of Jacobite lords and chiefs, with the Earl of Mar as leader. The Farquharson chieftains and the fighting tenantry were eager in the cause. But the laird's cool commonsense was proof against the prevailing enthusiasm; he had no belief in the possibility of success, and was dead against the whole venture. As vassal of the Earl, however, he had to obey, and once engaged he played his part stoutly and skilfully. He was taken prisoner at Preston, but received a pardon on the ground that he had been forced into the rebellion.

If the prospects of success did not tempt him in 1715, still less had he any illusions in 1745. By this time he was an old man, and frankly on the Hanoverian side, but the sentiment of the clan was as Jacobite as ever; so he judged it best to slip off to Leith till the storm blew over, leaving the field clear for his nephew, Francis Farquharson of Monaltrie, "the Baron Ban," who promptly raised a large contingent of the clansmen.

The last of the Farquharsons of Invercauld in the direct male line died in 1805. The titular chiefship of the clan then passed to the Farquharsons of Whitehouse, where indeed it had long lain as far as right of primogeniture was concerned; and on the death of Andrew Farquharson of Whitehouse in 1896, the family of Finzean became the representatives of the eldest male line of Donald of Castleton, eldest of the Deeside sons of Finlay Mor.

NOTABILITIES OF THE CLAN.—Though Clann Fhearchair enjoyed a high reputation for bravery and enterprise, it cannot be said that it produced any celebrities whose fame extended much beyond the north-east of Scotland. On the local stage, however, some of its leaders played a leading part in their day and generation, and a few of their names are not yet totally forgotten.

Donald Farquharson of Monaltrie was a keen Royalist and able soldier in the wars of the Continent. While Huntly was in the field, Monaltrie was his right hand man, and the leader of his Highland following. He afterwards served in the Montrose campaigns as Colonel, losing his life in Aberdeen in 1645, two months after the magnificent victory of Inverlochy. Spalding speaks of him with warm affection, and Patrick Gordon's elaborate sketch of his character in *Britane's Distemper* presents the picture of an ideal cavalier and Highland chieftain. Brave to a fault, affable, modest, generous, and constant in his loyalty, "if the sad fate of his untimely death had not broke the chain of his virtues, he had assuredly been as great as he was good, and he had adorned nobility, nobility not him." The local stories concerning him, which may be found in Grant's *Legends*, mythopœic as most of them evidently are, still delineate the same man as is seen in Gordon's contemporary sketch. Among his own people he was known as Dòmhnall Og na h-Alba, in allusion to the story current on Deeside that when on a visit to England he had so impressed the Southrons that they called him "Donald of Scotland."

After his death the leadership of the Deeside Highlanders under Montrose was taken up by William Farquharson of Inverey, commonly called William Maol ("bald"), who was



quite as indefatigable a King's man. He served all through the Montrose campaigns, and even joined the distracted rising led by Glencairn in 1652, by which time almost all the other Deeside partisans of the Stuarts had come to look upon resistance to Cromwell as hopeless.

His son and successor, John, the Black Colonel, is a well-known name. Having killed Gordon of Braichlie in 1666 he was outlawed, though it would appear that Gordon was really the aggressor, and thereafter lived an uneasy and more or less perilous existence. The surprising thing is that, in spite of his outlawry and his participation in the rising under Dundee, when he burned Mar Castle and ejected the Whig garrison, the family managed to keep hold of the estate. In the days of the Black Colonel and his son the prestige of the Invereys was at its height. The Earl of Mar even wished that John of Invercauld and his men should serve under Peter of Inverey in the Jacobite army, a proposal which, it is needless to say, the pride of the bigger laird found totally unacceptable.

In contradistinction to the house of Invercauld, which, as we have pointed out, followed a policy peculiar to itself, the Farquharsons of Monaltrie, Inverey, Auchindryne, and Balmoral, some or all of them, answered every call on the Stuart behalf from the Trot of Turriff to Culloden; nor were those of Whitehouse, Allanaquoich and other minor families less forward, not to mention the branches in the adjoining counties. The verse of the Gaelic poet which stands at the head of this article says no more than the bare historical truth.

The story of the clan being thus for the most part a recital of its deeds of military prowess, the casual reader may be excused for exaggerating the importance of this feature of old Highland life. It is much to be regretted that, while authentic history is so voluble on the sturt and strife, it is almost entirely silent on the peaceful, every-day existence of the people. Nothing but a "drum and trumpet" history of the Farquharsons, or of Highland Mar in general, is possible, simply because any other kind of material for reconstructing the past is almost totally wanting. Yet after all, *creachs* and civil wars were not the staple busi-

ness of life, nor was the Fiery Cross always flying from clachan to clachan. In the 17th and 18th centuries, at all events, long decades passed during which, apart from sporadic cateran outbursts, the clansmen tended their black cattle in the hills, and grew their patches of bere and oats as peacefully as their neighbours of the lowlands.

In this connection, another common misconception regarding the Highlanders may be mentioned in passing. The idea that they were cruel is as widespread as that they were incorrigibly lawless. The prevalence of this slander among Lowlanders and Englishmen is, no doubt, to be accounted for partly by the human weakness of believing the worst of an enemy, and partly by the fact that the Highlanders were made known to the outside world almost entirely by hostile observers—Government agents of various kinds, Covenanters, Whigs, and Hanoverians. Plenty of evidence could be adduced to show that the Highlanders conducted their warfare with as much humanity as was usual at the time, but one fact alone will be mentioned here, which of itself is perfectly conclusive as to the true character of the Highland soldier. When Highland regiments began to be raised for service under the British Crown in the Seven Years' war and the war of the American revolution, the baselessness of the calumnies that had hitherto passed current was at once discovered, just as a closer acquaintance with the Boers has led to a similar revisal of opinion. It was found that these regiments were not merely distinguished for bravery (*that* was no more than every one expected), but that in humanity and self-command, and the virtues springing therefrom, they were a model to the army. "Their conduct and manners softened the horrors of war." "The higher crimes were totally unknown among them: corporal punishment conveyed to their minds a greater degree of horror and shame than death itself." "Their behaviour was exemplary, as they felt known to their comrades, and would return disgraced to their native glen, and bring dishonour on their families." Such was the impression that the sons and grandsons of the wild Redshanks who had shaken George's throne made on their contemporaries; and we may be sure that, as national manners change but little from one generation to another, the Redshanks themselves were essentially the same men.

THE FARQUHARSONS AND CLAN CHATTAN.—The strength of patriarchal and tribal sentiment in the Highlands is well illustrated in the case of the Farquharson and Clan Chattan, to which confederacy they considered themselves to belong in virtue of their descent from Alexander Ciar Mackintosh or Shaw. They owed of course no sort of feudal obedience to the Mackintoshes, but the ties of kinship were not forgotten. Down to the 17th century they often sign their names “Farquharson *alias* Mackintosh,” and there are several bonds of alliance in which they acknowledge the Mackintosh as their “natyff chieff.” More than once they gave Clan Chattan armed assistance. When young Inverey killed Braichlie and brought the whole race of Gordon about his ears, it was to the Mackintosh and not to Invercauld that he turned in his need,* and apparently not in vain. They even hunted out their Clan Chattan kinsmen in the far Hebrides. There is among the Invercauld papers a bond of alliance in which the parties are John Farquharson of Invercauld on behalf of the whole kin and surname on Deeside and Donald Schaw (also descended from Alex. Ciar Mackintosh) within the bounds of Inchegaul (Island of Lewis). The date is 1625 and the place Kirk of Kindrocht, Braemar. It narrates “that baith the saidis parteis has throche remotnes and distance of their dwelling places bein ignorant of otheris [each other], and seeing the saidis pairteis acknowledges themselves to be one blood and to be cum of one stock and race, therefore they for themselves and their kind bind themselves to seccour and defend each other in all honest causes.”

In the last two Jacobite risings the Farquharsons were either incorporated in the Clan Chattan brigade or acted along with it. The part played by Invercauld’s daughter, Lady Mackintosh, in the ’45 is related elsewhere.

The last Farquharson of Invercauld died in 1805, and with him the family became extinct in the male line, as already mentioned. He left an only daughter. Some years before his death an arrangement seems to have been contemplated which would have re-united the sept with the parent clan. According to the late C. Fraser-Mackintosh,

*Fraser-Mackintosh, *Minor Septs*, p. 162.

who had good means of knowing, "well-wishers of Clan Chattan had, even before marriageable age, suggested a suitable matrimonial alliance for this great heiress, but it came to naught." The favoured suitor was Lockhart Ross of Balnagowan, who on his marriage assumed the name of Farquharson.

CHIEF DEESIDE BRANCHES OF CLANN FHEARCHAIR OR FHIONNLAIHD.

Farquhar Mackintosh or Shaw (15th cent.?)

Donald¹

Finlay Farquharson ("F. Mor," c. 1484-1547), of Invercauld, &c.

Donald (I.), of Castleton-Monaltrie (died c. 1619)²

Robert (died c. 1590) and others.
Hence the families of
INVERCAULD
MONALTRIE (2nd fam.)

Donald (II.), of Monaltrie

Robert
Hence the
fam. of
FINZEAN.

Alexander
Hence the
fam. of
ALLANAQUOICH.

James
Hence the
fam. of
INVEREY.
AUCHINDRYNE.
BALMORAL.
TULLOCHCOY.

Donald (III.), of
Monaltrie,
killed 1645.

James
Hence the fam. of
WHITEHOUSE.

Charles (sold Monaltrie).

1. The number of steps between Farquhar and Finlay is doubtful.
2. The "Baillie Mor." See chap. XIII.

ALEXANDER DAVIDSON

THE sketch of the poacher excited so much interest on the appearance of "Deeside Tales" that Michie made a point of adding to his collection any floating story concerning him—and they were at one time pretty numerous—that came in his way, in view of a second edition. McCombie Smith in his "Romance of Poaching," published some years ago, which contains an account of Sandy, mentions on Michie's authority that a fuller narrative might one day be expected from his pen. Unfortunately, however, almost all the additional materials on the subject which were found among his papers are in the form of memoranda intelligible only to himself. The only story which was written out is inserted in chapter xxiv. One or two others concern Sandy's sister and her smuggling exploits, and it has not been thought necessary to include them, especially as they are very much at second hand.

A fact which Michie does not refer to in his account of Sandy is worth recording. As in the case of George Brown, the Sennachie, his interest in his subject may have been stimulated by the tie of kinship. Brown was his grand-uncle and Sandy was his second cousin; and his father's house was one of those to which the wanderer occasionally resorted for a few hours' shelter.

In Scrope's *Days of Deer-Stalking* there is a chapter on Highland poachers in which Sandy Davidson is possibly referred to. Scrope was an Englishman who had the run of the Atholl deer forest about 1830, one of the pioneers of the army of English and cosmopolitan sportsmen which was about to descend on Scotland. As a squire and magistrate in the

south he was familiar with the "drunken vagabonds" (so he calls them) who lived by the trade of game stealing. His surprise at the Highland variety seems to have been considerable, and in spite of himself he felt their attraction. He had the candour at any rate, though he well knew the heavy toll they levied on the moors and forests, to do justice to their qualities in his book. "In the Highlands," he says, "one never hears of the ruffians that infest the preserves in England. Your Gael has a fine rough sense of honour about him . . . They have still a high regard for their chieftains." These are high compliments coming from such a quarter. As an instance of the peculiarities of the Highland poacher he tells a story of one who had lately been taken in the forest of Braemar; that, having some good points in his character, the noblemen who rented the ground told him that, if he would promise never to poach again in the district, his gun should be restored and he himself set at liberty. The man very coolly replied that he wished to have an hour to consider, and at the expiration of the time stepped forward and announced that they might take his gun and him too, for he would not give the promise.

The name of this high-spirited poacher is not given, but the date corresponds with Sandy's *floruit*; and if the story does not refer to him, it shows, at any rate, that he had contemporaries who played the game in the same spirit as himself.

A writer in the *Elgin Courant* in 1872 praises in high terms the truthfulness of Michie's account of the last of the old poachers, and as he supplies a few touches of his own, an extract from his remarks may be given here:

"Who is there of forty years of age, in all the upper districts of Moray, Banff, and Aberdeen shires, that does not remember Sandy Davidson, or, as he was called among the Banffshire hills, 'Muckle Davidson,' to distinguish him from another person of the name of Davidson, but a very different kind of man, and no relation, we believe, to Sandy, who was known as 'Little Davidson' or Charlie Davidson? Both were wandering poachers. Sometimes they travelled together but oftener they were separate. Indeed, their meetings were mere chance foregatherings. Charlie was the deadlier shot of the two, but he was a poacher and little more, with a good many of the

failings to which a life like his almost invariably leads. Sandy, on the other hand, however strange it may seem to say so, was still a gentleman—a gentleman in appearance, in manners, in conversation, and in feeling. To people generally in the districts over which he travelled he was little known except by sight. He might be seen walking along the road or through the hills, with his gun under his arm and his dog at his heels, with a dignity of bearing suited to a nobleman, but generally avoiding places of public resort, and not caring even to court casual conversation or make acquaintances as he went along. His fine figure was much admired, and his generous, noble nature gained him troops of friends, but a certain air of mystery was always associated with the lonely wanderer, and those who knew him best found him very reticent as to his own history—indeed to everything that concerned himself. That such a man should be a poor homeless wanderer and a poacher was a complete anomaly.”

CLAN POSSESSIONS
in
HIGHLAND MAR
about 1745.



Scale:—1 Inch = Four Miles

$\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
8 Fur

NOTE.—In this sketch map the boundaries of the clan areas are in places more or less approximate; and the smaller lairdships, such as the lands of the Stewarts in Glenmuick, the Mackenzies in Braemar, the Macgregors in Glengairn, &c., are not shown.

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ABERDEEN

